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REGIONAL HEARING CLERK
EPA REGION VI

UNITED STATES
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 6
DALLAS, TEXAS

IN THE MATTER OF:

PLANTERS COTTON OIL MILL

PINE BLUFF, ARKANSAS 71601

RESPONDENT

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EPA DOCKET NUMBER
EPCRA-06-2021-0506

CONSENT AGREEMENT
AND FINAL ORDER

CONSENT AGREEMENT

The Director of the Enforcement and Compliance Assurance Division of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region 6 (Complainant), and Planters Cotton Oil Mill (Respondent) (hereinafter Planters) in the above-referenced proceeding, hereby agree to resolve this matter through the issuance of this Consent Agreement and Final Order (CAFO).

I. PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

1. This proceeding for the assessment of civil penalties pursuant to Section 325(c) of the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA), 42 U.S.C. § 11045(c), is simultaneously commenced and concluded by the issuance of this CAFO against Respondent pursuant to 40 C.F.R. §§ 22.13(b), and 22.18(b)(2) and (3).

2. For the purposes of this proceeding, Respondent admits the jurisdictional allegations herein; however, Respondent neither admits nor denies the specific factual allegations contained in this CAFO. Respondent explicitly waives any right to contest the allegations and its right to appeal the proposed Final Order set forth herein and waives all defenses which have been raised

or could have been raised to the claims set forth in this CAFO.

3. Compliance with all the terms and conditions of this CAFO shall resolve federal civil liability for only those violations which are set forth herein.
4. Respondent consents to the issuance of this CAFO, and to the assessment and payment of the stated civil penalty in the amount and by the method set forth in this CAFO.
5. Respondent represents it is duly authorized to execute this CAFO and the party signing this CAFO on behalf of Respondent is duly authorized to bind Respondent to the terms and conditions of this CAFO.
6. Respondent agrees the provisions of this CAFO shall be binding on its officers, directors, employees, agents, servants, authorized representatives, successors, and assigns.
7. Respondent hereby certifies that as of the date of the execution of this CAFO, Respondent has corrected the violations alleged in this CAFO and is now, to the best of its knowledge, in compliance with all applicable requirements of Section 313 of EPCRA, 42 U.S.C. § 11023, and 40 C.F.R. Part 372.

II. STATUTORY AND REGULATORY BACKGROUND

8. Section 313 of EPCRA, 42 U.S.C. § 11023, 40 C.F.R. §§ 372.22 and 372.30 require the owner or operator of a facility with: (a) ten or more full-time employees; (b) a Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) major group or industry code listed in 40 C.F.R. § 372.23(a), for which the corresponding North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) subsector or industry codes are listed in 40 C.F.R. §§ 372.23(b) or (c); and (c) a toxic chemical listed under Subsection 313(c) of EPCRA and 40 C.F.R. § 372.65, that manufactured, processed, or

otherwise used the chemical in excess of the threshold quantity established under Subsection 313(f) of EPCRA, 42 U.S.C. § 11023(f), and 40 C.F.R. §§ 372.25, 372.27, or 372.28, to complete and submit a toxic chemical release inventory Form R, for each toxic chemical known by the owner or operator to be “manufactured, processed, or otherwise used” in quantities exceeding the established threshold quantity, to the Administrator of EPA and to the State in which the facility is located by July 1, for the preceding calendar year.

9. Pursuant to Section 313(a) of EPCRA, 42 U.S.C. § 11023(a), the owner or operator of a facility shall complete a toxic chemical release form for each toxic chemical listed under 313(c) of EPCRA, 42 U.S.C. § 11023(c) that was manufactured, processed, or otherwise used in quantities exceeding the toxic chemical threshold quantity established by 313(f) of EPCRA, 42 U.S.C. § 11023(f) during the preceding calendar year at such facility. Such form shall be submitted to the Administrator and to an official or officials of the State designated by the Governor on or before July 1, 1988, and annually thereafter on July 1 and shall contain data reflecting releases during the preceding calendar year.

10. Pursuant to Section 313(f) of EPCRA, 42 U.S.C. § 11023(f), and 40 C.F.R. § 372.25, the threshold amount for reporting under Section 313(b) of EPCRA, 42 U.S.C. § 11023(b), and 40 C.F.R. § 372.30, is 25,000 pounds for any toxic chemical manufactured or processed, and 10,000 pounds for any toxic chemical otherwise used for the applicable calendar year.

Alternative reporting thresholds are set forth in 40 C.F.R. §§ 372.27 and 372.28.

11. 40 C.F.R. § 372.30(a) requires that for each toxic chemical known by the owner or operator to be manufactured (including imported), processed, or otherwise used in excess of an

applicable threshold quantity in 40 C.F.R. §§ 372.25, 372.27, or 372.28 at its covered facility described in 40 C.F.R. § 372.22 for a calendar year, the owner or operator must submit to EPA and to the State in which the facility is located a completed EPA Form R (EPA Form 9350-1), or EPA Form A (EPA Form 9350-2), and, for the dioxin and dioxin-like compounds category, EPA Form R Schedule 1 (EPA Form 9350-3) in accordance with the instructions referred to in subpart E of this part.

12. Pursuant to Section 313(g)(1)(C)(iii) of EPCRA, 42 U.S.C. § 11023(g)(1)(C)(iii), and 40 C.F.R. § 372.85(b)(16), the Form R shall include information relative to waste treatment, including the type of waste stream containing the reported chemical, the treatment method applied to the waste stream, and an estimate of the efficiency of the treatment.

III. FINDINGS OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW
A. PRELIMINARY ALLEGATIONS

13. Respondent is a corporation organized under the laws of the State of Arkansas and authorized to do business in the State of Arkansas.

14. Respondent is a “person” as defined by Section 329(7) of EPCRA, 42 U.S.C. § 11049(7).

15. Respondent owns and operates the facility at 2901 Planters Drive, Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71601.

16. Respondent’s facility identified in Paragraph 15 is a “facility” as that term is defined by Section 329(4) of EPCRA, 42 U.S.C. § 11049(4), and 40 C.F.R. § 372.3.

17. At the time of the violation(s), Respondent’s facility had ten (10) or more “full-time employees” as that term is defined by 40 C.F.R. § 372.3.

18. Respondent's facility is in primary NAICS code 311224 (Soybean and Other Oilseed Processing) and is within subsector code 311 (Food Manufacturing), which is listed in 40 C.F.R. § 372.23(b).

19. **N-hexane** is a "toxic chemical" within the meaning of 40 C.F.R. §§ 372.3 and 372.65.

20. During calendar year 2019 the toxic chemical in Paragraph 19 was "manufactured, processed, or otherwise used," as those terms are defined by Section 313(b) of EPCRA, 42 U.S.C. § 11023(b), and 40 C.F.R. § 372.3, at Respondent's facility.

21. On or about March 25, 2021, an off-site investigation was initiated to determine compliance of Respondent's Pine Bluff, Arkansas facility with Section 313 of EPCRA. During the off-site investigation, EPA alleged the facility had failed to correctly report releases of N-hexane for 2019 TRI reporting forms on or before the due date of July 1, 2020 for the TRI chemical referred to in Paragraph 19.

22. On April 16, 2021, the EPA sent Respondent a Notice of Potential Violation and Opportunity to Confer (NOPVOC) letter. On April 22, 2021, the EPA responded to the documentation and information received from Respondent as a result of the opportunity to confer and articulated the EPA's position concerning Respondent's compliance with EPCRA, 42 U.S.C. § 11023.

B. VIOLATIONS

23. Complainant hereby restates and incorporates by reference Paragraphs 1 through 22.

24. During calendar year 2019 Respondent "manufactured, processed, or otherwise used" the TRI chemical identified in Paragraph 19, at the Respondent's facility in excess of the applicable

threshold quantities for reporting.

25. Respondent submitted an incorrect TRI reporting form for the TRI chemical in Paragraph 19 for the 2019 calendar year by reporting incorrect air releases of **N-hexane**.

26. EPA finds Respondent violated 42 U.S.C. § 11023(g)(1)(B), and 40 C.F.R. § 372.85(b)(2) by failing to submit a correct TRI reporting form for the air releases of the TRI chemical identified in Paragraph 19.

IV. TERMS OF SETTLEMENT

A. CIVIL PENALTY

27. For the reasons set forth above, Respondent has agreed to pay a civil penalty which has been determined in accordance with Section 325(c) of EPCRA, 42 U.S.C. § 11045(c), which authorizes EPA to assess a civil penalty of up to Fifty-Five Thousand Nine Hundred and Seven Dollars (\$55,907) per day per violation of EPCRA.¹ Upon consideration of the entire record herein, including the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, which are hereby adopted and made a part hereof, and upon consideration of the nature, circumstances, extent and gravity of the alleged violations, and with respect to Respondent's ability to pay, history of prior EPCRA Section 313 violations, the degree of culpability, economic benefit or savings (if any) resulting from the violations, and other factors as justice may require, it is **ORDERED** that Respondent be

¹ The statutory maximum penalty level under Section 325(c) of EPCRA, 42 USC 11045(c) has been adjusted over time as required by the Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act of 1990 (28 U.S.C. § 2461 note; Pub. L. 101-410), as amended by the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996, and most recently, by the Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act Improvements Act of 2015 (28 U.S.C. § 2461 note; Pub. L. 114-74, Section 701). EPA implements these adjustments through rulemaking which are codified in 40 CFR Part 19. As adjusted by the *Amendments to the EPA's Civil Penalty Policies to Account for Inflation (effective January 15, 2018)* and *Transmittal of the 2018 Civil Monetary Penalty Inflation Adjustment Rule (2018 Rule)* (83 Fed. Reg. 1194), 40 C.F.R. § 19.4, the Administrator may assess a civil penalty of up to \$55,907 per violation per day of violation occurring after November 2, 2015 and where penalties are assessed on or after January 15, 2018.

assessed a civil penalty of Twenty-four Thousand Dollars and No Cents (**\$24,000**).

28. Within thirty (30) days of the effective date of this CAFO, Respondent shall pay the assessed civil penalty by certified check, cashier's check, or wire transfer, made payable to "Treasurer, United States of America, EPA - Region 6". Payment shall be remitted in one of three (3) ways: regular U.S. Postal Service mail (including certified mail), overnight mail, or wire transfer.

For U.S. Postal Service mail, the check(s) should be remitted to:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Fines and Penalties
Cincinnati Finance Center
P.O. Box 979077
St. Louis, MO 63197-9000

For overnight mail (non-U.S. Postal Service, e.g. Fed Ex), the check(s) should be remitted to:

U.S. Bank
Government Lockbox 979077 US EPA Fines & Penalties
1005 Convention Plaza
SL-MO-C2-GL
St. Louis, MO 63101
Phone No. (314) 418-1028

For wire transfer, the payment should be remitted to:

Federal Reserve Bank of New York
ABA = 021030004
Account = 68010727
SWIFT address = FRNYUS33
33 Liberty Street
New York, NY 10045
Field Tag 4200 of the Fedwire message should read "D 68010727 Environmental Protection Agency"

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In addition to the above methods of payments:

Payments may also be made electronically. For information on electronic payments, please visit <https://www.epa.gov/financial/makepayment>

The above web site may also be referenced for making payments via debit, credit card, or checking account for any dollar amount up to \$24,999.99.

PLEASE NOTE: Docket number EPCRA 06-2021-0506 shall be clearly typed on the check, or other method of payment, to ensure proper credit. If payment is made by check, the check shall also be accompanied by a transmittal letter and shall reference Respondent's name and address, the case name, and docket number of the CAFO. If payment is made by wire transfer, the wire transfer instructions shall reference Respondent's name and address, the case name, and docket number of the CAFO. Respondent shall also send a simultaneous notice of such payment, including a copy of the check and transmittal letter, or wire transfer instructions to the following:

Morton E. Wakeland, Jr., Ph.D.
EPCRA 313 Enforcement Coordinator
U.S. EPA, Region 6
Toxic Enforcement Section (ECDST)
1201 Elm Street, Suite 500
Dallas, TX 75270-2102
wakeland.morton@epa.gov

and

Lorena Vaughn
Regional Hearing Clerk
U.S. EPA, Region 6
1201 Elm Street, Suite 500
Dallas, TX 75270-2102
vaughn.lorena@epa.gov

Respondent's adherence to this request will ensure proper credit is given when penalties are received by EPA and acknowledged in the Region.

29. Respondent agrees not to claim or attempt to claim a federal income tax deduction or credit covering all or any part of the civil penalty paid to the United States Treasurer.

30. If Respondent fails to submit the first installment within thirty (30) days of the effective date of this Order, Respondent may be subject to a civil action to collect the penalty in full, in an appropriate district court of the United States pursuant to Section 325(f) of EPCRA, 42 U.S.C. § 11045(f).

31. Pursuant to 31 U.S.C. § 3717 and 40 C.F.R. § 13.11, unless otherwise prohibited by law, EPA will assess interest and late payment penalties on outstanding debts owed to the United States and a charge to cover the costs of processing and handling a delinquent claim. Interest on the civil penalty assessed in this CAFO will begin to accrue thirty (30) days after the effective date of the CAFO and will be recovered by EPA on any amount of the civil penalty that is not paid by the respective due date. Interest will be assessed at the rate of the United States Treasury tax and loan rate in accordance with 40 C.F.R. § 13.11(a). Moreover, the costs of the Agency's administrative handling of overdue debts will be charged and assessed monthly throughout the period the debt is overdue. See 40 C.F.R. § 13.11(b)

32. EPA will also assess a \$15.00 administrative handling charge for administrative costs on unpaid penalties for the first thirty (30) day period after the payment is due and an additional \$15.00 for each subsequent thirty (30) day period that the penalty remains unpaid. In addition, a penalty charge of up to six percent per year will be assessed monthly on any portion of the debt

which remains delinquent more than ninety (90) days. See 40 C.F.R. § 13.11(c). Should a penalty charge on the debt be required, it shall accrue from the first day payment is delinquent. See 31 C.F.R. § 901.9(d). Other penalties for failure to make a payment may also apply.

33. This Consent Agreement and Order shall not relieve Respondent of its obligation to comply with all applicable provisions of federal, state or local law, nor shall it be construed to be a ruling on, or determination of, any issue related to any federal, state or local permit.

34. This document is a “Final Order” as that term is defined in the “Enforcement Response Policy for Section 313 of the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (1986) and Section 6607 of the Pollution Prevention Act (1990),” dated August 10, 1992 (Amended: 1996, 1997, and 2001; and updated in accordance with the 2016 Civil Monetary Penalty Inflation Adjustment Rule on February 24, 2017) for the purpose of demonstrating a history of “prior such violations.”

B. RETENTION OF ENFORCEMENT RIGHTS

35. EPA does not waive any rights or remedies available to EPA for any violations by Respondent of Federal or State laws, regulations, or permitting conditions.

36. Nothing in this CAFO shall relieve Respondent of the duty to comply with all applicable provisions of Section 313 of EPCRA, 42 U.S.C. § 11023, and 40 C.F.R. Part 372.

37. Nothing in this CAFO shall limit the power and authority of EPA or the United States to take, direct, or order all actions to protect public health, welfare, or the environment, or prevent, abate or minimize an actual or threatened release of hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, hazardous substances on, at, or from Respondent’s facility. Furthermore, nothing

in this CAFO shall be construed to prevent or limit EPA's civil and criminal authorities, or that of Federal, State, or local agencies or departments to obtain penalties or injunctive relief under Federal, State, or local laws or regulations.

C. COSTS

38. Each party shall bear its own costs and attorney's fees. Furthermore, Respondent specifically waives its right to seek reimbursement of its costs and attorney's fees under 5 U.S.C. § 504 and 40 C.F.R. Part 17.

D. EFFECTIVE DATE

39. This CAFO becomes effective upon filing with the Regional Hearing Clerk.

40. The EPA and Respondent agree to the use of electronic signatures for this matter. The EPA and Respondent further agree to electronic service of this Consent Agreement and Final Order, pursuant to 40 C.F.R. § 22.6, by email to the following addresses:

To EPA: wakeland.morton@epa.gov

To Respondent: jfricke@plantersoil.com

**THE UNDERSIGNED PARTIES CONSENT TO THE ENTRY OF THIS CONSENT
AGREEMENT AND FINAL ORDER:
FOR THE RESPONDENT:**

Date: _____

**John
Fricke**

Digitally signed by
John Fricke
Date: 2021.06.14
09:42:33 -05'00'

John Fricke, CEO
Planters Cotton Oil Mill
2901 Planters Drive
Pine Bluff, AR 71601

FOR THE COMPLAINANT:

Date: June 23, 2021

Cheryl T. Seager

Digitally signed by CHERYL SEAGER
DN: c=US, o=U.S. Government,
ou=Environmental Protection Agency,
cn=CHERYL SEAGER,
0.9.2342.19200300.100.1.1=68001003651793
Date: 2021.06.23 10:25:12 -05'00'

Cheryl T. Seager
Director
Enforcement and Compliance Assurance
Division
U.S. EPA Region 6
Dallas, TX 75270-2102

FINAL ORDER

Pursuant to Section 325(c) of EPCRA, 42 U.S.C. § 11045(c), and the Consolidated Rules of Practice Governing the Administrative Assessment of Civil Penalties, 40 C.F.R. Part 22, the foregoing Consent Agreement is hereby ratified. This Final Order shall not in any case affect the right of EPA or the United States to pursue appropriate injunctive or other equitable relief or criminal sanctions for any violations of law. This Final Order shall resolve only those causes of action alleged in the Consent Agreement. Nothing in this Final Order shall be construed to waive, extinguish or otherwise affect Respondent's (or its officers, agents, servants, employees, successors, or assigns) obligation to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local statutes and regulations, including the regulations that were the subject of this action. Respondent is ordered to comply with the terms of settlement and the civil penalty payment instructions as set forth in the Consent Agreement. In accordance with 40 C.F.R. § 22.31(b), this Final Order shall become effective upon filing with the Regional Hearing Clerk.

Dated _____

**Rucki,
Thomas**

Digitally signed by Rucki,
Thomas
DN: cn=Rucki, Thomas,
email=Rucki.Thomas@epa.gov
Date: 2021.06.24 14:17:10
-05'00'

Thomas Rucki
Regional Judicial Officer
U.S. EPA Region 6
Dallas, Texas 75270-2102

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that that a true and correct copy of the foregoing Consent Agreement and Final Order was delivered electronically to the Regional Hearing Clerk, U.S. EPA, Region 6, 1201 Elm Street, Dallas, Texas 75270-2102, and that a true and correct copy was sent this day in the following manner to the addressees:

Copy via Email to Complainant:

wakeland.morton@epa.gov
and
vaughn.lorena@epa.gov

Copy via Email to Respondent:

John Fricke, CEO jfricke@plantersoil.com
and
Brian Flenon bflenon@palntersoil.com

**Morton E.
Wakeland, Jr.**

Digitally signed by Morton E. Wakeland, Jr.
DN: cn=Morton E. Wakeland, Jr.,
o=U.S. EPA Region 6, ou=Enforcement
& Assurance Compliance Division,
email=wakeland.morton@epa.gov,
c=US
Date: 2021.06.25 07:42:10 -05'00'

Morton E. Wakeland, Jr. ("Mort"), Ph.D.
EPCRA Section 313 Enforcement and TRI
Program Coordinator
U.S. EPA Region 6
Compliance Assurance and Enforcement
Division (ECD)
Toxics Section (ECDST)
Dallas, Texas 75270
(214) 665-8116