

FACTSHEET

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

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Plant Protection & Quarantine Veterinary Services

How APHIS Facilitates Agricultural Exports

As the world moves into the 21st century, nations have modified their ideas of protectionism and embraced such international trade agreements as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Countries have opened their doors a little wider to the prospects of new trade, particularly in the area of agriculture. With this increased interest in agricultural trade comes a bigger, more visible role for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

APHIS helps to facilitate agricultural trade for both importers and exporters, and its Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) unit is central to the successful flow of healthy commodities into and out of the United States. PPQ is responsible for ensuring that healthy seeds, plants, bulbs, timber, flowers, vegetables, fruits, and a multitude of other agricultural commodities can be exported without threatening agriculture and natural resources. APHIS' Veterinary Services (VS) unit ensures that animals and animal products, such as semen and embryos, can be exported from this country without threatening the animal health in their countries of destination.

U.S. Agricultural Exports Equals Big Business

The United States is by far the world's largest exporter of agricultural commodities: our 1998 agricultural exports were worth more than \$51 billion. American farmers truly do feed the world, and APHIS helps not only to facilitate the trade of U.S. agricultural products but to expand markets as well. For example, in 1999, after several years of negotiations, the USDA announced that Japan would allow entry of all U.S. tomatoes, a move worth \$50 million to U.S. growers. The change was made after APHIS officials proved that the tomatoes were no threat to Japanese agriculture. In 1998, the USDA signed several animal sanitary protocols with China for U.S. livestock and livestock genetics. With this move, U.S. producers

will be able to expand the livestock and livestock genetics export market to China—a market that totaled \$6 million in 1996. These are just a few of the many examples in which efforts by APHIS have paid off for American farmers and exporters.

Plant Export Certification

PPQ assists American farmers and exporters by providing phytosanitary inspection and certification for plants and plant products being shipped to foreign countries. As a courtesy, PPQ will provide phytosanitary certificates to exporters when required by a foreign country. The phytosanitary certificates verify that the products have been inspected and are pest and disease free. PPQ issues two kinds of phytosanitary certificates—those for domestic plants and plant products, and those for foreign plants and plant products offered for reexport. More than 25 billion dollars' worth of exported commodities were supported by phytosanitary certificates issued by PPQ in 1997. To obtain information or apply for a phytosanitary inspection and certification, contact your local Federal or State plant regulatory office, or for general information contact

USDA-APHIS-PPQ

Export Unit, Phytosanitary Issues Management

4700 River Road, Unit 140

Riverdale, MD 20737-1228

Telephone: (301) 734-8537

Fax: (301) 734-3249

EXCERPT Program—Because of the sheer quantity of certificates that PPQ issues—paperwork for more than 300,000 shipments each year—and because many countries have vastly different entry requirements for agricultural products, PPQ developed a data base to track the phytosanitary requirements for each country. This data base, called EXCERPT, allows PPQ officers, State and county officials, and even industry members to access export information. For example, if a U.S. exporter wanted to send flour to Mexico, that exporter could access the EXCERPT data base to find that they need a phytosanitary certificate and an import permit from Mexican authorities. The same exporter would also be able to

find out that there is no specific certification needed to ship fruit for consumption to Hong Kong.

The data base also lists the status of endangered plant species, the commodities that are not eligible to be exported to specific countries, and any changes in other countries' entry requirements. EXCERPT identifies ports that are authorized to certify for export those endangered and threatened plants protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). For example, PPQ officials at San Francisco, a CITES-approved port, can certify cacti for export.

With the availability of such extensive export information, U.S. exporters usually do not run into any complications with trade. However, in cases where U.S. goods arrive at a foreign nation and are denied entry, PPQ will try to negotiate with foreign plant health authorities on behalf of the U.S. exporter.

User Fees for Plant Exporters—Under direction from Congress, PPQ charges a user fee for issuing phytosanitary certificates. These fees cover the costs of providing certification services, and exporters must pay at the time the certificate is issued.

Exporting Animals, Birds, and Animal Products

APHIS' VS works closely with exporters who engage in trade with foreign nations. VS has a data base called the International Regulation Retrieval System in Fort Collins, CO, that lists the animal health requirements of other countries. Both exporters and veterinarians can access this retrieval system if they have the necessary computer equipment.

For requirements on exporting animal products to foreign countries, exporters should contact their trading partners in the foreign country. VS will work with exporters to meet those requirements, both in examining the products and issuing certificates.

For permit applications and information about import and export requirements and user fees for animals, birds, and animal products, contact

USDA-APHIS-VS
National Center for Import/Export
4700 River Road, Unit 40
Riverdale, MD 20737-1231
Telephone: (301) 734-3277
Fax: (301) 734-6402

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Exporting CITES-Listed Plants and Animals

PPQ enforces the plant provisions of CITES and supplies exporters who are engaging in the commercial trade of CITES-listed plants with general permits. Exporters may obtain a general permit from PPQ by contacting

USDA-APHIS-PPQ
Permit Unit
4700 River Road, Unit 136
Riverdale, MD 20737-1236
Telephone: (301) 734-8645
Fax: (301) 734-5786

These exporters must also obtain export permits for the plants from the U.S. Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). All FWS-issued export permits for plants must be validated by PPQ at a designated port before export to help assure that the foreign country will accept shipment.

FWS also issues export permits for any animals, like sea turtles and crocodiles, that are protected by CITES. To obtain an export permit from FWS for CITES-listed plants or animals, call (800) 358-2104. FWS charges a \$25 processing fee for these permits and requires that animals and plants be shipped out of designated ports.

Facilitating Trade

These days, under the influence of trade agreements such as NAFTA and GATT, agricultural trade is booming. And APHIS' dual role of facilitating agricultural exports while protecting American agriculture has become even more crucial. PPQ's and VS' export certification efforts inspire much-needed trust from foreign countries that they are receiving healthy, pest- and disease-free agricultural shipments. Moreover, APHIS' efforts on the homefront to protect American agriculture ensure that U.S. consumers can continue to enjoy the tastes of American products while still sampling the tastes of the rest of the world.

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