

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service International Visitor Program at Riverside

The volume of agricultural trade and the complexity of sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) issues surrounding trade are increasing every year. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has established the International Visitor Program and SPS Outreach Initiative to address the growing need for a strengthened network with international counterpart organizations to better exchange animal and plant health information with regard to trade.

The fundamental role of the Program is to support USDA's efforts to work with trading partners to develop and establish internationally accepted standards for the safe and fair movement of plant and animal commodities. The harmonization of import and export regulations and of disease- and pest-surveillance methodologies is essential to minimize risks in international trade. APHIS believes that by encouraging and enhancing the animal and plant health infrastructure development of our trading partners through training, orientation, and education, the Agency can promote fair trade worldwide and protect American agriculture.

The Visitor Center

The Visitor Center at Riverside is located in the APHIS headquarters building in Riverdale, MD. The Riverside Center is the central location to receive APHIS international scientists, agricultural regulatory officials, and other agricultural personnel affiliated with USDA. The staff provides assistance with training and orientation programs, requests for consultant service, internships, and information exchanges on SPS-related subjects.

The SPS Resource Laboratory

The SPS resource laboratory is located in the APHIS Information Center and has information on SPS topics, USDA and APHIS organizational structures, APHIS position papers, briefings, and learning modules on SPS-related subjects. Self-paced learning modules provide basic SPS concepts on interna-

tional standards and organizations and how the United States interprets those standards for its own SPS system. The laboratory resources are available to international scientists to conduct research while in this country.

The Outreach Program

The outreach program provides APHIS and USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) field employees with resources to address SPS issues and share information. These resources are shared with in-country counterparts and other collaborators as necessary. Learning modules on specific SPS issues exist in a variety of forms, such as active or static video, text, and Web- or computer-based modules, for delivery to diverse audiences.

USDA International Contacts

APHIS and FAS foreign service attachés are generally aware of all officials traveling from their respective countries to USDA headquarters regarding SPS issues. These foreign service officers are the primary point of contact for all international visitors to USDA headquarters and should inform the APHIS International Visitor Program and appropriate USDA officials of impending visits. Based on shared objectives by APHIS and the visitors, programs can then be developed to meet their specific training requirements.

Training requests. In an effort to strengthen cooperation with U.S. trading partners, APHIS provides and hosts various training, orientation, and education to international visitors. The following list includes some examples of requests received.

Orientation trips for international government officials. The purpose and format for these visits can vary greatly. Visits can be arranged to APHIS offices (both at headquarters and in the field), other USDA agencies, the Department of State, colleges and universities, private industry facilities, laboratories, production areas, and farms.

Consultant services. The purpose of these requests is primarily to educate, train, or jointly conduct research. Consultant services usually take place in another country. For example, the consultant could assist in survey design and evaluations of another country's quarantine system, processes, facilities, or equipment.

Informational materials. These requests are primarily for information or materials to conduct training. The course materials are available in English. There are no restrictions on translation or distribution of these materials.

Education. This request is more formal and takes place at a specific institution established to conduct training, such as a college or university.

Performance-based training. International scientists can attend courses at APHIS' Professional Development Center in Frederick, MD. Courses include the plant health system analysis course and other SPS related training.

Language. International visitors wishing to participate in the International Visitor Program and SPS Outreach Initiative should be proficient in English. If an interpreting service is required, arrangements must be made through the visitor's embassy prior to their visit.

Inquiries

For information about the APHIS International Visitor Program and SPS Outreach Initiative contact:

Linda Small, Program Director
APHIS International Visitor Program
USDA-APHIS
4700 River Road
Riverdale, MD 20737
E-mail: linda.small@aphis.usda.gov

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.