



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

December 21, 1998

Dear Importer:

As you may know, the interim rule amending our Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (APHIS) regulations on the importation of logs, lumber, and other unmanufactured wood articles takes effect on December 17, 1998. We have taken this action in response to numerous detections of the Asian longhorned beetle and other highly destructive wood-boring pests directly associated with shipments of solid wood packing materials from China. For your information, I am enclosing a detailed summary of the new requirements under the interim rule and amendments to the rule containing specific information on the role the U.S. Customs Service will play in helping to enforce the requirements. The amendments also clarify that the restrictions established by the interim rule also apply to Hong Kong.

Asian longhorned beetles attack more than 100 species of hardwood trees, including maple, horse chestnut, and elm. Because the insects spend much of their life cycles deep within wood, they are difficult to reach with pesticides and can be eradicated only by destroying infested trees. If the beetles became established in the United States, they could have a severe impact on the United States' forest product, nursery, tourist, and maple syrup industries, which generate combined annual revenues of approximately \$138 billion. Since August 1996, major infestations of the Asian longhorned beetle have been detected in Brooklyn, Amityville, and Lindenhurst, New York, and several locations in the Chicago, Illinois, area. Additionally, Asian longhorned beetles and three other exotic wood borers have been discovered recently 26 times in 14 States around the country in warehouses and residential sites outside of U.S. ports of entry.

The interim rule, which was published in the Federal Register on September 18, 1998, sets conditions for the acceptance of solid wood packing material in shipments of goods from China to the United States. Because there was some confusion on this issue, we wish to clarify that the interim rule applies to cargo leaving China on or after December 17, 1998. Under the interim rule, cargo that includes solid wood packing material must be treated to alleviate the risk of wood-boring pests. According to established rulemaking procedures, a public comment period was held for 60 days to allow all interested parties the opportunity to express their views on the interim rule. We further solicited comment by holding public hearings in Washington, D.C.; Seattle, Washington; and Los Angeles, California. The public comment period closed on November 17, 1998, and APHIS officials are now carefully reviewing all comments received. This information will be taken into consideration as APHIS pursues further rulemaking on this issue.

I assure you that we have not undertaken this measure without considering the impact such regulations may have on your business. However, with our Nation's trees and wood-related industries at risk, we believe the interim rule's stringent safeguarding measures are necessary to prevent the entry of Asian longhorned beetles and similar pests. We cannot prevent such introductions without your assistance, and we hope you will share this information with other importers and the exporters with whom you do business.

If you have any additional questions regarding the interim rule or its requirements, I urge you to call APHIS' State Plant Health Director in your State, whose telephone number and address are available on APHIS' homepage on the World Wide Web. The address is <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/ppqoffice.html>.

We appreciate your support and cooperation as we work to protect our Nation's natural resources from destructive wood-boring pests.

Sincerely,

Michael V. Dunn
Under Secretary
Marketing and Regulatory Programs

2 Enclosures