

Importing Animals and Animal Products

At U.S. ports-of-entry, CBP also enforces USDA's regulations for the importation of live animals (including poultry and pet birds) and animal products (e.g., meats, cheeses, casein, gelatins, certain animal hides and racks, and germplasm—both semen and embryos). APHIS' Veterinary Services provides guidance to CBP on these importations to ensure that they are not infected with foreign animal diseases (e.g., bird flu or foot-and-mouth disease) that could threaten U.S. livestock populations.

For permit applications and information about import requirements and user fees related to importing animals, birds, and animal products, contact

USDA-APHIS-VS
National Center for Import/Export
4700 River Road, Unit 40
Riverdale, MD 20737

Telephone: (301) 734-3277/8364
Fax: (301) 734-4704/8226
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/permits/index.shtml>

Additional Information

If you have any questions about the SITC program or if you want to report smuggling activity, please e-mail your concerns to sitc_mail@aphis.usda.gov or call the national SITC hotline toll free at (800) 877-3835. To locate the local SITC unit nearest you, visit our Web site at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/international_safeguarding/sitc and follow the links.



A SITC officer intercepts fish balls (containing prohibited poultry and pork ingredients) from the Orient. Unprocessed poultry products are prohibited entry into the United States from certain Asian, African, and European countries because of the prevalence of highly pathogenic avian influenza.

REPORT SMUGGLED AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

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This publication supersedes Program Aid 1829, "Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance Program," which was issued in August 2005.

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Cover photos:

Top: SITC officers in the San Juan, PR, work unit inspect air cargo for illegal agricultural products. Bottom left: A SITC officer surveys a market for regulated produce. Seemingly healthy plants that have circumvented official importation channels can harbor and introduce harmful pests and diseases into the United States, an outcome that could cost taxpayers millions to eradicate or manage. Bottom right: Concluding his inspection for prohibited agricultural commodities, a SITC officer reseals a box with USDA-labeled tape to let the importer know the box has been examined. (APHIS photographer R. Anson Eaglin took the images positioned at the top and bottom left on the cover. The photo at the bottom right comes from the APHIS photo library, as do the uncredited pictures inside the leaflet.)

Faded photo of prohibited plant and meat products:

During an operation along a border, a SITC work unit seized these prohibited or restricted plant and meat products from travelers. These commodities represent potential pathways through which potentially devastating agricultural pests and diseases could be introduced into the United States, jeopardizing commercial food production or environmental resources. (APHIS photo by Jamie Berlowitz.)



Stamping Out Agricultural Smuggling and Ensuring Trade Compliance



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Program Aid No. 1957

The increase in international trade and travel has led to an influx of prohibited and restricted agricultural commodities' being smuggled or imported illegally into the United States. Many of these products could introduce invasive pests and diseases that threaten the health and viability of U.S. production agriculture, as well as the robust biodiversity of America's landscape. Highly pathogenic avian influenza (commonly referred to as bird flu), exotic Newcastle disease, foot-and-mouth disease, exotic fruit flies, foreign wood-boring insects, and invasive weeds all have a couple of things in common. All of these invasive pests and diseases can be introduced into the country via illegal agricultural imports, and all of these intruders are capable of devastating the United States' agriculture and economy. A single outbreak of one of these pests or diseases could cost U.S. producers millions of dollars in lost production and export markets. And because of the legal mandate for the Federal Government to protect American agriculture, U.S. taxpayers would end up shouldering millions of dollars more in pest and disease eradication or management costs. Finally, the establishment of foreign pests here would inevitably lead to Americans' paying more for food.

To respond to this ever-increasing threat, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) created the Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance (SITC) program. SITC, which falls under APHIS' Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program, conducts risk-based, antismuggling activities to prevent the unlawful entry and distribution of prohibited agricultural commodities. Agricultural smuggling is punishable by fines, criminal prosecution, or both.

Defending American Agriculture and Natural Resources

APHIS strives to ensure that imported products are free of harmful pests and diseases by requiring permits and animal and plant health certificates for the importation of agricultural products. Such documentation verifies that plant and animal products meet APHIS' stringent import requirements and that foreign exporters have followed proper procedures for shipping agricultural commodities to the United States.

Not all agricultural commodities enter the United States through proper channels, however. SITC officers work across the country to identify and close smuggling pathways and intercept illegally imported agricultural products. Officers canvass wholesale markets, distribution points, retail stores, and restaurants to check for prohibited agricultural commodities and educate importers, distributors, market owners, and operators about proper importation procedures and requirements. Using state-of-the-art detection methods, devices, and analysis tools, the SITC program also works closely with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and other Federal and State agencies during agricultural antismuggling and cooperative interdiction efforts at air, land, and sea ports-of-entry nationwide. CBP and SITC collaborate on special operations and intensified inspections of cargo, passenger vehicles, and parcels to intercept prohibited items before they can enter the United States.

While SITC is housed under APHIS' PPQ program, officers also routinely enforce the agency's animal-health regulations in the domestic market environment. APHIS' Veterinary Services requires permits and certificates for most animal products imported from foreign countries. To mitigate animal disease risks, SITC officers destroy all smuggled or prohibited animal products they intercept.



Compliance Through Education Is a Priority

Education and outreach to enhance trade compliance are significant aspects of the SITC program. SITC officers not only explain Federal agricultural regulations and permit procedures to importers, brokers, and distributors but also provide these stakeholders with information that enables them to import agricultural commodities into the United States legally. SITC's outreach efforts target importers, trade associations, markets, retailers, foreign student associations, other agencies, and the general public. Through these activities, a communication network has been developed to share information on smuggling pathways. To overcome cultural barriers, SITC issues many program materials in multiple languages.

A SITC officer checks the contents of international cargo against its bill of lading to ensure that prohibited agricultural products have not been mismanifested as fish or some other commodity not regulated by USDA, a common practice among agricultural smugglers.



SITC officers randomly select and inspect pallets of imported agricultural products to ensure that importers comply with Federal importation laws and regulations. Educating importers is a key component of SITC's trade compliance mission.

Importing Plant and Plant Products

APHIS regulations for the importation of plants and plant products are enforced by CBP officers at U.S. ports-of-entry nationwide. For incoming shipments, these officials examine phytosanitary certificates—legal documents issued by an exporting country to certify that a shipment meets the plant health standards of the United States. Phytosanitary certificates indicate that the shipment is free of pests and diseases that do not exist here. Anyone wishing to import certain plants and plant products into this country is required to obtain a phytosanitary certificate for each shipment.

Importers can obtain information or import permits by contacting:

**USDA-APHIS-PPQ
Permit Unit**

4700 River Road, Unit 136
Riverdale, MD 20737

Telephone: (877) 770-5990

Fax: (301) 734-5786

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/permits/index.shtml>



In 2001, PPQ officers apprehended a passenger smuggling 44 finches aboard an international flight. (This passenger was later convicted and sentenced in Federal court.) Illegally imported live birds present a risk of introducing potentially devastating poultry diseases into the United States. Between 2002 and 2003, APHIS and cooperating States spent more than \$160 million to eradicate an outbreak of exotic Newcastle disease from California, Nevada, Arizona, and Texas.