

Implementation Action Plan

Outreach and Communication

Issue:

There is a need for access to Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials by stakeholders to be able to voice their concerns. There is a need for CBP to establish forums to discuss issues with stakeholders. There is also an identified need for better communications and information sharing between CBP and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

Recommended Response:

CBP and APHIS management officials at all levels should seek opportunities to meet regularly and interact with stakeholders to provide briefings concerning Agriculture inspection activities in their areas of responsibilities.

- At all levels of CBP and APHIS there will be outreach events to allow dialog on stakeholder needs and CBP programs.
- CBP and APHIS will revisit the appendix to Article 8 of the MOA to encourage interaction between CBP and APHIS at all organizational levels.

Correlation to Report Recommendation or Other Feedback:

Stakeholders, CBP, and APHIS recognize the need for better communication and information sharing at all levels.

Findings:

The PPQ State Plant Health Director (SPHD) is the main Federal point of contact for the State Plant Regulatory Official (SPRO) and the agriculture industry concerning plant health and animal product programs and may act as the Agriculture Programs liaison to CBP as well. Both the SPRO and the industry look to the SPHD for guidance, leadership, and accountability regarding pest conditions in their state. When CBP was created in 2003, the SPHD no longer had direct knowledge of daily operational issues in the ports of entry (POE's). As a result, they could no longer brief the SPRO or the agriculture industry about daily agriculture inspection activities at the POE's. Without regular and recurring information coming from CBP, especially at the port level, anecdotal information such as an apparent lack of concern about cleaning and disinfecting passenger footwear by CBP, quickly became a symbol of CBP's lack of concern for the entire agriculture mission. The hierarchical nature of information flow in CBP was mentioned by several stakeholders as an impediment to communication and is reflected in the lack of communication and access to local CBP personnel and operations.

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Expected Outcome:

CBP has a very effective communication and outreach program utilizing both the Assistant Commissioners for Public Affairs and Congressional Affairs. CBP understands the importance of delivering clear communication. The agriculture mission will benefit when these two organizations in CBP develop joint plans with APHIS to emphasize and publicize the agriculture mission just as they do all the other mission critical work. At the same time local CBP officials will be able to reach out locally to demonstrate that the agriculture mission is being effectively managed at the local level as well. As these outreach initiatives build in scope and frequency, CBP will become a more transparent Agency to the agriculture industry. Increased trust and confidence in CBP will result from more frequent and meaningful communication. The information provided will be released in a standardized format. This level of trust will lead to a more collaborative approach to pest interdiction.

Implementation Plan:

Tasks

- Include agriculture outreach in joint CBP and APHIS strategic plan development
- At the national level, hold regular and recurring meetings with NPB and other stakeholder organizations as appropriate for program briefings, etc.
- At the Field Office level, hold regular and recurring meetings with SPHD's and SPRO's to discuss items of mutual concern.
- At the port level, provide regular and recurring invitations to observe CBP's agriculture operations to various stakeholder groups.
- CBP and APHIS at all levels will seek out opportunities to meet with the agriculture industry, i.e., NASDA, Farm Bureau, NCBA, ANLA, etc.
- CBP (appropriate level of management) and APHIS attendance at all Regional and National Plant Boards with sufficient time on the agenda to present its agriculture activities and accomplishments.
- Improve CBP website to showcase its agriculture activities.
- Yearly CBP accomplishment report to the agriculture industry.
- In addition to face-to-face settings, CBP could provide articles to various agriculture industry publications.
- APHIS and CBP, when appropriate, will invite the other agency to attend local meetings.
- There will be a joint review of the appendix of Article 8 of the MOA.
- Engage OPA and LPA in developing a joint outreach communication plan.
- Create a standardized format for dissemination of information
- (Insert the task regarding the development of an AQI oversight group including stakeholders)

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Communications Needs

- This outreach effort needs to be announced by the Commissioner and Administrator at a suitable occasion such as the National Plant Board Meeting or at some other event of high importance or visibility.
- Protocols for CBP interaction with the agriculture industry at the field and port levels need to be communicated to all concerned, not just within CBP.
- Authority and accountability for outreach must be firmly communicated to CBP managers in the field.
- Monthly outreach reports need to be collected and, more importantly, shared with all Field Offices.

Accountable Individual/Group

- CBP Commissioner
- APHIS Administrator
- OPA
- LPA

Resources

- Training in presentation skills may need to be provided and funding for travel may need to be available.
- Commitment to provide and empower the resources needed to complete the action plan.

Sequencing / Linkages

- Joint Agency Planning Action Plan

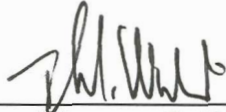
Challenges to Implementation

Funding for travel and training is often discretionary. Travel away from the Port or Field Office or time spent planning an event for the agriculture industry may add to the already heavy workload for CBP managers.


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Review Block -- for the use of Agency/Department leadership in adopting, modifying, or rejecting the plan.

Outreach and Communication Implementation Action Plan adopted by both agencies on June 26, 2007, by:



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JUN 26 2007