

# Questions and Answers Concerning Phytosanitary Certificates and the Import and Export of Plants and Plant Products

## **Q. What is a phytosanitary certificate?**

**A.** A phytosanitary (plant health) certificate is an official document issued by an exporting country, which certifies that the phytosanitary status of a shipment meets the phytosanitary regulations of the importing country.

## **Q. Who needs a phytosanitary certificate?**

**A.** Anyone wishing to import certain plants and plant products into the United States is required to have a phytosanitary certificate. PPQ employees advise importers on phytosanitary restrictions and provide information (including regulations, policies, and procedures) on bringing agricultural commodities into the United States.

Foreign countries may also require exporters of U.S. commodities to obtain a phytosanitary certificate from APHIS, in accordance with the importing country's requirements for importing U.S. plants and plant products. PPQ offers information to exporters on the requirements of importing countries for U.S. commodities through its EXCERPT database.

## **Q. Why would APHIS require me to have a phytosanitary certificate before bringing certain products into the United States?**

**A.** The intended purpose of a phytosanitary certificate is to expedite the entry of plants or plant products into the United States while protecting American agriculture. Through its issuance of a phytosanitary certificate, an exporting country is verifying that the shipment has been inspected and conforms to the phytosanitary import requirements of the United States. In addition, the phytosanitary certificate indicates that the shipment is free of pests and diseases that do not exist in the United States.

## **Q. How do I obtain a phytosanitary certificate to import an item into the United States?**

**A.** In order to obtain a phytosanitary certificate you must contact a the national plant protection organization of the exporting country. A plant regulatory official authorized to inspect and certify the phytosanitary conditions of plants and plant products offered for export will inspect the item, and if satisfied, will issue a phytosanitary certificate for your items.

If you will be traveling and wish to return to the United States with an agricultural item, you should review the import requirements for that particular item before you try to bring it into the United States.

## **Q. Is there a fee for obtaining a phytosanitary certificate from an exporting country?**

**A.** Contact the plant quarantine office of the exporting country to determine this, or to locate agriculture departments in other nations, visit <http://www.nalusda.gov/ref/govern.htm>.

## **Q. Does APHIS issue phytosanitary certificates to export U.S. agricultural commodities?**

**A.** APHIS applies the same standards to its exported plants and plant products that it requires of imported goods. PPQ staff members inspect many plants and plant products to ensure they meet the phytosanitary regulations of the importing country before they leave U.S. shores. PPQ aids American farmers and exporters in trading their commodities by providing phytosanitary inspection and certification for plants and plant products when foreign countries request documentation that the products have been examined.

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. The phytosanitary certification process has facilitated more than \$100 billion of trade over the last 5 years.

## **Q. Is there a fee for obtaining an APHIS-issued phytosanitary certificate?**

**A.** To help APHIS with the operating costs involved in conducting phytosanitary inspections and issuing the necessary certificates, Congress gave PPQ the authority to charge user fees for performing its inspection services. PPQ employees are required to collect that payment prior to issuance of the certificate.

To obtain information or apply for phytosanitary inspection and certification, contact your local PPQ or State plant regulatory office. General information for plant export certification is available at [www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/pim/exports](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/pim/exports), or can be obtained by contacting USDA-APHIS-PPQ Export Services, 4700 River Road, Unit 140, Riverdale, MD 20737-1228, or by calling (301) 734-8537.

**Q. What if I need to import or export fruits and vegetables?**

**A.** Information concerning the import and export of these products or acquiring a PPQ permit may be obtained by contacting USDA-APHIS-PPQ, 4700 River Road, Unit 133, Riverdale, MD 20737, or by calling 1-877-770-5990. Permit information may also be obtained by visiting the USDA-APHIS-PPQ Web site at [www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq) and clicking on “permits.”

**Q. What if I need to import or export animals or animal products?**

**A.** For information concerning the import and export of animals and animal products, please contact APHIS Veterinary Services’ National Center for Import and Export at (301)734-3277, or visit them on the Web at [www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/ncie](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/ncie).

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