

AQIM Program Introduction and Summary

Introduction

The Agriculture Quarantine Inspection Monitoring (AQIM) Program consists of daily or weekly random sampling activities along several agricultural import pathways. The AQIM process uses proven statistical techniques to collect information about these pathways and the commodities entering through them into the United States. That information is then analyzed to assist in managing the potential risks these pathways and commodities present to U.S. agriculture (e.g., Quarantine Material Intercepted (QMIs), pests intercepted, or actions taken). This data can either validate known potential risk or help identify additional trends, patterns or areas of potential risk to U.S. agriculture. This data provides important information to support a port's agricultural risk-based decision making, improve their selection criteria and more efficiently better use of a port's current and future resources. The AQIM data is also used in the annual performance measures that USDA reports to Congress as required by the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), which requires all government programs to be managed based on results achieved.

AQIM Pathway Activities and Sampling Rates Summary

Pathway	Num. of Ports Participating	Daily Samples Per Port	Weekly Samples Per Port	Monthly Samples Per Port	National Approach Rate (%)**	
					FY22	FY23
Air Passenger *	26	10	70	300	8	7
Preclearance (passenger) *	6	10	70	300	7	7
Predeparture (pax) PPQ *	7	10	70	300	8	11
Northern Border Vehicles * [†]	25	min. 10	min. 70	300	14	10
Southern Border Vehicles *	21	min. 10	min. 70	300	9	8
Mail **	6	10-15	-	275-300	1	1
Air Cargo:						
a. Perishable	12	-	2	8 - 10	5	4
Maritime Cargo:						
a. Perishable	8	-	2	8 - 10	5	7
b. WPM	19	-	2	8 - 10	3	3
c. Italian Tiles	6	-	2	8 - 10	3	3
d. Other	-	-	-	-	3	3
Northern Border Truck Cargo***						
a. Truck Cargo	6		6	min. 24 - 26	1	1
Southern Border Truck Cargo	3		2-8	min. 8 - 32	1	1

* Minimum sampling is 10 per day, unless arranged differently by National AQIM Program Manager and CBP Agriculture Programs and Trade Liaison (APTL) staff. The number of samples are determined “per port”, “per terminal” or “per crossing” depending on port location.

** Samples per day or per week are dependent on days worked per week and non-work holidays.

*** Northern Border Reefer Container have been suspended until further notice. Southern Border Truck Cargo sampling numbers depend on monthly “high” and “low” cargo volume seasons. Since September 2018, six additional ports suspended AQIM activities until further notice because of the RBS test protocol.

[†] Ports included under the Northern Border Vehicle pathways must review Table 4-6-2 in the AQIM Handbook.

Basic Components for a Successful AQIM Program

- Proper execution of AQIM sampling, inspection, and data collection/entry procedures in accordance with established guidelines and using approved methods.
- Support from management and staff at all levels of the organization.

AQIM Data Collection Forms

AQIM data collection forms (PDF format) are available for download and printing under each pathway section of the online AQIM handbook.

Help & Reference

Further assistance and information on AQIM can be obtained via the following sources:

1. The online [AQIM Handbook](#)
2. Contacting PPQ AQIM National Program Manager Edna M. Cintron at (240) 454-1835 or by email: Edna.M.Cintron@USDA.gov
3. For AQIM Program inquiries: QPAS-AQIM@USDA.gov

Agricultural Risk Management System (ARM)

For assistance with the use of the ARM web-based system, APHIS and DHS-CBP employees must contact the ARM Helpdesk at (301)-851-2252 or by email ARM-Helpdesk@USDA.gov. Hours of operation are 8:00 am - 10:00 pm ET M-F.

PPQ employees who are new users to the ARM system or are current users who requires additional ARM access, will need to fill out the **ARM Administration Form** and submit it via SharePoint to PPQ Quarantine Policy, Analysis, and Support (QPAS).

Changes or revisions suggested by CBP users regarding AQIM, should be forwarded to APTL AQIM Point of Contact Andrea Sinclair at APTLSIDA@CBP.DHS.gov. Notify Agriculture Programs and Trade Liaison (APTL) staff of any unusual circumstances that prevent normal AQIM sampling to take place like i.e., flight termination, flooding, weather issues, local port issues, strikes, etc.

AQIM Program Changes and Reminders

The changes and reminders regarding the AQIM Program activities are listed below.

Changes:

1. The AQIM Handbook content continued to be revised, and an updated version was published by the Manuals Unit.
2. All the worksheets, except for the one for Predeparture, were revised and updated. These worksheets included changes like improved instructions to provide additional guidance when conducting the AQIM inspections, new fields (i.e., how to estimate articles weight, regulatory issue, what units to use according to the article), etc.
3. AQIM inspections were resumed in Predeparture pathway on October 1st, 2022.
4. Passengers random sampling for Air Passengers pathway at Sanford and Miami, FL (Terminal E), and San Juan, PR airports was reduced from ten samples daily to five.

5. A new policy was included in the handbook in regard to the due date to enter AQIM data collected in ARM. same as for WAD, AQIM data must be enter by the 10th of the following month.
6. There was a change in Maritime, Air Cargo and Northern and Southern Border Truck Cargo Pathways in terms of reporting data obtained from a randomly selected AQIM shipment that contain mixed multiple commodities. Now instead of two separate data entries for two inspections, it's one ARM report with two separate inspections. In addition, there was a change in the inspections for wood packaging material (WPM). The new instructions state that if the randomly selected sample does not have WPM associated with it, keep the sample but record it in the AQIM worksheet as a negative finding.
7. After reviewing and analyzing five years of AQIM data (FY15 to FY20) from Maritime Cargo in Baltimore and Air Cargo in San Juan, PR, it was decided to suspend the AQIM sampling of Italian Tiles for the port of Baltimore and to temporarily suspend the inspection of perishables in Air Cargo San Juan, PR. The decision went into effect at the beginning of FY22 and will be revised during FY23.

Reminders:

1. AQIM forms are no longer Fiscal Year specific. The same forms will always be used, regardless of the year, unless revised or corrected. See lower right corner of online PDF forms for the most recent revision dates. Record all data on the appropriate AQIM worksheet and then report that information in ARM for each pathway.
2. Air and maritime ports conducting AQIM monitoring for perishable commodities must include cut flowers in addition to the fresh fruits and vegetables in this perishable category. Miami, FL is the only port exempted from including cut flowers. Any other exceptions are to be arranged in coordination with APTL and the PPQ AQIM National Program Manager.
3. Northern Border Cargo Pathway - Bulk loaded loose perishable cargo (actual cargo commodity that is floor loaded on truck bed: no boxes, crates, cartons, bags, etc.) is exempt from the AQIM perishable sampling population.
4. AQIM sampling activities continued to be suspended for cargo inspections in the following southern land border ports due to the risk-based sampling (RBS) protocol: Pharr, Laredo, Nogales, San Luis, Calexico, and Otay Mesa. It will remain like this until further notice.
5. Each work site participating in the AQIM Program must designate a local AQIM coordinator. In addition to prepare a standard operating procedure (SOP) that includes sampling processes, steps to resolve issues and concerns related to the AQIM Program, etc.

AQI Monitoring Activities for Non-Cargo Pathways

1. **Air Passenger Pathways (US Foreign Arrival, Preclearance, and Predeparture):**
 - A sampling protocol of 300 Customs Declarations (including all passengers associated with these declarations) per month per terminal is needed at most airports. Since Customs Declarations (CBP 6059B form), are currently done orally, in paper or electronic; sampling procedures (logistics of where to sample, etc.) should accommodate this change. Must ensure that samples are taken from the entire passenger population.
 - Apply appropriate AQIM inspection procedures for each sample, 100% hand inspection of all carry-ons and checked baggage is required.
 - Predeparture activities are performed by USDA PPQ. These activities are not conducted by CBP.

2. Southern and Northern Border Vehicle Pathways

- Conduct a sampling protocol by randomly selecting a minimum of 10 vehicles per day per staffed border crossing. Select these samples from the entire non-commercial vehicle population approaching the crossing. A random time generator tool (for example, Random.org) can be used for this purpose. This random sampling procedure is to be part of your standard operating procedure (SOP) for ready access and application. Sample amounts are either "per port" or "per crossing," depending on the port location. This is to take place at ports with one or more full time CBPAS and during CBPAS duty hours. AQIM samples should continue to be collected under Code Orange or higher alerts.
- Use 7-point inspection procedures on all vehicles and 100% hand inspection procedures on all passenger baggage and personal effects.
- Follow this sampling protocol assuming a 7-day work week.

If a port location has only one CBPAS, then 5-10 vehicles samples (as a basic rule) must be taken daily dependent on the days the port is staffed. However, locations with a single CBPAS inspector are encouraged to sample more than the minimum of 5 vehicles per day when possible. Ports with the Northern Border Vehicle pathway should review the AQIM Handbook for further sampling details.

3. Mail Pathway (US Postal Service air/surface)

- A monthly sampling protocol of 300 mail packages from all postal packages (apart from obvious bundles or parcels containing books or magazines) is necessary. Months with non-work holidays will impact this number.
- Using the current sampling procedure, properly select among the following based on the number of real workdays each week:
 - if work 5 days per week select 14 mail package samples per day
 - if work 6 days per week select 12 mail package samples per day
 - if work 7 days per week select 10 mail package samples per day
- Use the proper AQIM inspection techniques for every sample.

AQI Monitoring Activities for Commercial Cargo Pathways

The following cargo categories need to be monitored in the respective pathways. Make sure you follow the inspection processes for a randomly selected AQIM shipment that contains mixed multiple commodities from the same country and/or different countries in the air, maritime and land border cargo pathways. Review the appropriate section of the AQIM Handbook for further information on inspecting these types of cargo shipments.

1. Air Cargo

This pathway's cargo category is perishable agricultural cargo, defined as fresh fruits, vegetables or cut flowers. It's important to remember that Miami, FL is the only port exempted from including cut flowers. According to the sampling protocol, 2 to 4 samples must be randomly selected from a minimum of two different Air Waybills (AWBs) per week per airport. Exclude seed shipments, pre-cleared cargo, National Agriculture Release Program (NARP) cargo, Transportation and Exportation (T&E) shipments, frozen commodities and mandatory treatment cargo. Any deviation from these minimum sample quantities must be arranged and authorized by CBP APTL and PPQ National AQIM Coordinator. The following should be taken into account:

- Inspect cargo using appropriate AQIM hypergeometric inspection procedures for each sample. See the AQIM Handbook for information on hypergeometric inspection procedures.

- If the shipment consists of clam shell packaging or smaller film wrapped retail packaging or trays in boxes, then consider total number of clam shells, trays, etc. for inspection purposes.
- Each box, carton, clam shell, tray etc., selected from the cargo shipment must be 100% inspected.

2. Land Border Cargo

a. Southern Border Truck

This pathway's cargo category is commercial plant perishable commodities and products. According to the sampling protocol, 6 to 12 samples of this type of category must be randomly selected from a minimum of 6 trucks per week per port. There may be up to 2 AQIM commodities/inspections per truck. Exclude seed shipments, pre-cleared cargo, National Agriculture Release Program (NARP) cargo, Transportation and Exportation (T&E) shipments, frozen commodities and mandatory treatment cargo.

If a port has distinctive high and low volume seasons of different perishable cargo commodities, then adjust sampling during these periods as follows:

High Volume Period: 8 samples per week

Low Volume Period: 2 samples per week

Note: Port must determine what periods of time during the year are of high and/or low volumes.

The information above is to be used for periods of time when the commodities in this category have distinct volume differences. If this is not the case, then apply the following sampling protocol:

- Inspect cargo using appropriate AQIM hypergeometric inspection procedures for each sample.
- If the shipment consists of smaller retail units like clam shell packaging, smaller film wrapped retail packaging or trays in boxes, then consider total number of clam shells, trays, etc., to determine the appropriate number to inspect.
- Each box, carton, clam shell, tray, retail unit, etc., selected from the cargo shipment must be 100% inspected.

b. Northern Border Truck

This pathway's cargo category is commercial plant perishable commodities and products, even if stated as Canadian origin. According to the sampling protocol, 6 to 12 samples of this type of category must be randomly selected from a minimum of 6 trucks per week per port. Up to 2 AQIM commodities/inspections may occur per truck. Exclude seed shipments, pre-cleared cargo, National Agriculture Release Program (NARP) cargo, Transportation and Exportation (T&E) shipments, frozen commodities, mandatory treatment cargo and loose bulk loaded perishable cargo (actual cargo commodity that is floor loaded on truck bed, no boxes, crates, cartons, bags, etc., used for containment of commodity). The following should be taken into account:

- Inspect cargo using appropriate AQIM hypergeometric inspection procedures for each sample.
- If the shipment consists of smaller retail units like clam shell packaging or smaller film wrapped retail packaging or trays in boxes, then consider total number of clam shells, trays, etc., for the appropriate number to inspect.
- Each box, carton, clam shell, tray, retail unit, etc., selected from the cargo shipment must be 100% inspected.

Note: AQIM monitoring for reefer containers in Northern Border is suspended until further notice.

3. **Maritime Cargo**

The following commodities or commodity types are excluded from this pathway sampling universe: seed shipments, pre-cleared cargo, National Agriculture Release Program (NARP) cargo, Transportation and Exportation (T&E) shipments, frozen commodities and mandatory treatment cargo.

a. **Perishable Agricultural Cargo**

This pathway's cargo category is defined as fresh fruits, vegetables or cut flowers. According to the sampling protocol, 2 randomly selected containers (or container equivalent) must be inspected per week per port. The following should be taken into account:

- Inspect cargo using appropriate AQIM hypergeometric inspection procedures for each sample.
- If the shipment consists of smaller retail units like clam shell packaging, smaller film wrapped retail packaging or trays in boxes, then consider total number of clam shells, trays etc., to determine the appropriate number to inspect.
- Each box, carton, clam shell, tray, retail unit, etc., selected from the cargo shipment must be 100% inspected.

b. **Wood Packaging Material (WPM)**

According to the sampling protocol, 2 randomly selected containers must be inspected per week per port. The following should be taken into account:

- When inspecting cargo with WPM associated with it, assure to inspect as much WPM as the cargo permits. Partial or full de-vanning may be necessary based on situation and judgment of the CBPAS.
- If the cargo sample does not have WPM associated with it DO NOT SKIP this sample. Keep that sample to perform the AQIM inspection and record it as a negative finding.
- Do not use a perishable or Italian tile cargo sample to replace the WPM sampling when the port is assigned to do inspections for one or both types of categories.

c. **Italian Tile Container Cargo:**

According to the sampling protocol, 2 randomly selected containers must be inspected per week per port, taking in consideration the tile seasonality. In addition to the cargo, the WPM associated with the cargo shipment must be inspected as much as cargo permits. Partial or full de-vanning may be necessary based on situation and judgment of CBPAS.

Acronyms

APTL - Agriculture Programs and Trade Liaison
AQAS - Agricultural Quarantine Activity System
AQIM - Agriculture Quarantine Inspection Monitoring
ARM - Agricultural Risk Management System
BRASS - Border Release Advanced Screening and Selectivity
CBP - Customs and Border Protection
CBPAS - CBP Agriculture Specialist
COMPEX - CBP's Random Compliance Examination
GPRA - Government Performance and Results Act
NARP - National Agriculture Release Program
PPQ - Plant Protection and Quarantine
QMI - Quarantine Material Intercepted
RBS - Risk Based Sampling
T&E - Transportation and Exportation
USDA - United States Department of Agriculture

Ports Participating in AQIM Activities by Pathway

The port's participation in the AQIM Program is indicated by the "X" marks.

Port Name	Air Passenger	Cargo				Mail
		Air	Maritime			
		Perishable	Perishable	WPM	Italian Tile	
AZ Phoenix	X					
CA Long Beach			X	X		
CA Los Angeles	X	X				X
CA Oakland				X		
CA San Francisco	X	X				X
CO Denver	X					
DE Wilmington			X			
FL Cape Canaveral						
FL Ft. Lauderdale	X					
FL Miami	X	X	X	X	X	X
FL Orlando	X					
FL Port Everglades			X	X	X	
FL Sanford	X					
FL Tampa	X					
FL West Palm Beach				X		
GA Atlanta	X	X				
GA Savannah				X	X	
HI Honolulu	X	X		X		
IL Chicago	X	X				X
LA New Orleans				X		
MA Boston	X	X		X		
MD Baltimore	X			X		
MI Romulus	X					
MN Minneapolis	X					
MS Gulfport				X		
NC Charlotte	X					
NJ Newark	X	X	X	X	X	X
NY Brooklyn			X	X		
NY Jamaica	X	X				X
PA Philadelphia	X		X	X		
PR San Juan*	X			X		
SC Charleston				X		
TX Dallas	X	X				
TX Houston	X	X	X		X	
TX San Antonio	X					
VA Dulles	X	X				
VA Norfolk				X	X	
WA Seattle (Air)	X					
WA Seattle (Maritime)				X		
WA Tacoma				X		

*AQIM sampling of Perishables at Air Cargo in San Juan, PR was temporarily suspended until the end of FY22 and will be revised during FY23.

Passenger Preclearance	
Port Name	Country
Aruba	Aruba
Freeport	Bahamas*
Nassau	Bahamas
Bermuda	Bermuda
Montreal	Canada
Toronto	Canada
Vancouver	Canada

*Suspended until further notice since 2019 due to hurricane devastation

Southern Border*		
Port Name	Vehicle	Truck Cargo
AZ Douglas	X	
AZ Nogales**	X	X
AZ San Luis**	X	X
CA Calexico West	X	
CA Calexico East**	X	X
CA Otay Mesa**	X	X
CA San Ysidro	X	
CA Tecate	X	
NM Columbus	X	
NM Santa Teresa	X	
TX Anzalduas	X	
TX Brownsville	X	X
TX Eagle Pass	X	
TX El Paso	X	X
TX Hidalgo	X	
TX Laredo**	X	X
TX Los Indios	X	X
TX Pharr**	X	X
TX Progreso	X	
TX Roma	X	
TX Ysleta	X	

*Including border crossings that fall under these locations' jurisdiction.

** Suspended temporarily for cargo inspections until further notice because of the RBS test protocol.

Northern Border*		
Port Name	Vehicle	Truck Cargo
ID Eastport	X	
ID Porthill	X	
ME Calais	X	
ME Houlton	X	
ME Jackman	X	
ME Van Buren	X	
MI Detroit	X	X
MI Port Huron	X	X
MN Grand Portage	X	
MN International Falls	X	
MT Raymond	X	
MT Roseville	X	
MT Sweetgrass	X	
ND Dunseith	X	
ND Pembina	X	
ND Portal	X	
NY Alexandria Bay	X	X
NY Buffalo	X	X
NY Champlain	X	X
VT Derby Line	X	
VT Highgate Springs	X	
WA Blaine	X	X
WA Lynden	X	
WA Oroville	X	
WA Sumas	X	

*Including border crossings that fall under these locations' jurisdiction.

Predeparture
Port Name
HI Honolulu
HI Kahului
HI Kona
HI Lihue
PR Aguadilla
PR Carolina
PR Ponce

AQIM Program Quality Assurance

The following questions serve as guidance to ensure the AQIM Program's quality assurance.

1. AQIM Sampling and Monitoring

- Is there a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for AQIM developed, updated, and available to employees?
- What has been done to ensure that the samples are selected randomly?
- What has been done to limit bias?
- What difficulties are encountered in ensuring randomness?
- How are these difficulties being dealt with?
- How are samples selected so that they are proportional to the approaching population?
- What is done to ensure that all members of a population (i.e., passengers, vehicles or cargo) have a chance to be selected?
- What system is used to select times for selecting samples?
- How is the timing of sample selection adjusted so busy times have proportionally more samples?
- What aspects of monitoring have been the most difficult to implement? What has been done to improve the situation?
- What changes have been made in daily operations as a result of monitoring?

2. Inspections, QMIs, and Pest Interceptions

- What is done to ensure that all samples are properly inspected? A hundred percent inspection of non-cargo baggage or mail is required, ensuring the hypergeometric cargo inspection process is used where applicable.
- How are AQIM QMIs separated and marked?
- How are QMIs inspected for pests?
- How often are the QMIs inspected for pests?
- Are the QMIs 100% inspected for various pests?
- What system is in place to ensure the pest interception number from the PPQ Form 309 or the ARM Diagnostic Request event is entered into the AQIM record when pests are found?

3. Data Review

- Are data worksheets being used and instructions being followed?
- Who coordinates and ensures completeness and accuracy of AQIM data collection?
- How is consistency ensured?
- Is the data entry up to date?
- How often is data quality assurance done?
- What does the available gap analysis information show about AQIM and port operations?
- How reasonable are the initial results?
- What is the port doing with the information?