

Questions and Answers: Importing Indian Mangoes to the United States

Q. When did APHIS publish the final rule to allow mango imports from India?

A. On March 12, 2007, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) published in the *Federal Register* under Title 7 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 319.56-2tt, a final rule to allow, under certain conditions, the importation of commercial shipments of fresh mangoes from India into the continental United States.

Q. What are the requirements for exporting mangoes from India to the United States?

A. To ensure plant pests of quarantine significance do not enter the United States through the importation of this fruit, the mangoes are first inspected for the presence of pests by an APHIS preclearance officer in India. If there are no pests present, the fruit will be authorized to be treated with specified doses of irradiation prior to export at an APHIS-certified facility. If, however, live pests are found during the preclearance inspection, the shipment will be refused treatment and will not be eligible for export to the United States.

Mangoes must be packed in insect-proof boxes and safeguarded after treatment to prevent reinfestation. It must also be accompanied by a phytosanitary certificate issued by the national plant protection organization (NPPO) of India with additional declarations certifying that the treatment and inspection of the mangoes were made in accordance with the regulations.

Q. How do I begin the process of importing mangoes from India?

A. To begin the process of importing mangoes from India, you need to apply for an APHIS permit. You can apply for the permit online via APHIS' ePermitting system at www.aphis.usda.gov/permits by completing the Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) Form 587 for fresh fruits and vegetables. ePermits is a Web-based tool that allows you to apply for a permit, check its status, and view it online. You may also submit your application to PPQ's Permit Services unit. The

address is: Permit Services, USDA-APHIS-PPQ, 4700 River Road, Unit 133, Riverdale, MD 20737. The permit application form is available online at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/> or by calling (877) 770-5990. The permit to import mangoes from India is valid for 1 year from its issuance date.

Q. Are there any other requirements to import mangoes from India?

A. Yes. In addition to USDA requirements, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Customs and Border Protection (CBP) have specific requirements to import mangoes from India. For information about FDA's requirements, please e-mail industry@fda.gov. For more information on CBP's requirements, please visit www.cbp.gov. You may also contact an international customs broker who will help you with inspection and shipping logistics as well as the various agency approvals.

Q. What happens when my shipment arrives in the United States?

A. When your mangoes arrive at a U.S. port-of-entry, CBP inspectors will verify three documents accompanying the shipment to ensure it was properly treated and inspected:

- PPQ Form 203—Foreign Site Certificate of Inspection—signed by an APHIS officer in the exporting country;
- Phytosanitary certificate issued by India's NPPO to certify that the shipment has been treated; and
- APHIS import permit, verifying that the shipment has been authorized by USDA to be imported into the United States.

If these entry requirements are not met, the shipment will be prohibited entry. In addition, CBP inspectors may further inspect precleared commodities at the port of first arrival.

Q. Can I carry fresh mangoes from India to the United States on my next flight?

A. No. The rule only applies to commercial shipments of mangoes. Individuals traveling from India to the United States cannot bring mangoes, even if they have been treated, in their personal baggage. The mangoes must enter the United States via commercial channels (air or ship) where quarantine security can be assured. Boxes of mangoes leaving that chain of custody are prohibited entry into the United States.

Q. Can I send mangoes from India to the United States through the mail?

A. No. As stated above, mangoes can only be commercially shipped to the United States. The mangoes must be sent directly from the irradiation facility to its means of commercial conveyance (air or ship) and then exported directly to the United States. This ensures a strict chain of custody in the event the imported fruit shows signs of pest infestation.

Q. Why haven't Indian mangoes been allowed into the United States until now?

A. Indian mangoes are the first fruit irradiated in a foreign country and approved for importation into the United States. APHIS approved the use of irradiation as a quarantine treatment for fruits and vegetables in October 2002. Then, in January 2006, APHIS published another rule approving a minimum generic dose (400 gray) of irradiation for imported fruits and vegetables. Until the availability of this generic dose, the pests associated with the mangoes, specifically the mango seed weevil and the mango pulp weevil, could not be mitigated with any other APHIS-approved treatments.

Q. What is food irradiation?

A. Irradiation involves briefly exposing food to ionizing energy for a specific length of time in order to destroy or sterilize bacteria, microorganisms, or other pests of concern. Food is irradiated in a special processing facility and never comes in direct contact with the energy source. It is important to note that irradiation does not necessarily kill the pest, it will however sterilize it, rendering it incapable of reproducing or emerging from a host to an adult. Thus, there may be instances where you will see insects on your fruit; however, if they've been treated, they are not harmful to you or the fruit.

Q. How does the process of irradiation affect the pests?

A. The energy waves produced during the irradiation process physically breaks the molecular structure of the pests' DNA, killing or sterilizing them. However, at specified doses, the structure of the atom is not affected.

Q. Is it safe to eat irradiated fruits and/or vegetables?

A. Yes. The FDA has evaluated the safety of this technology over the last 40 years and has found irradiation to be safe under a variety of conditions and has therefore approved its use for many foods. The agency determined that the process is safe and effective in decreasing or eliminating harmful bacteria, insects, and parasites. In certain fruits and

vegetables it inhibits sprouting and delays ripening, which allows for a longer shelf life.

Food irradiation is currently used in over 50 countries to control plant pests and is approved by the World Health Organization, the American Medical Association, and many other organizations around the world. Although food irradiation has been in existence since the 1950s, scientists have just recently begun focusing on its ability to control harmful pests and diseases associated with fruits and vegetables.

Q. How do I know if my food has been irradiated?

A. The FDA requires that irradiated foods include labeling with either the statement, "treated with irradiation" or "treated by irradiation" along with the international symbol for irradiation, called the Radura.

Q. Where can I find out more information on this subject?

A. To learn more about imports of Indian mangoes into the United States, please visit the APHIS Web site at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom/hotissues/index.shtml> and, under "Hot Issues" click on the link for Indian Mango Imports.

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