



Frequently Asked Questions: Ensuring Continued U.S. Soybean Exports to China

Why is China requiring the United States to implement a systems approach for soybean exports to that country?

China, the largest importer of U.S. grain, expressed concerns in September 2017 over increased interceptions of quarantine weed seeds in U.S. soybean exports. In response, USDA assembled a federal-industry working group to develop practical recommendations for addressing China's concerns and keep U.S. soybeans moving to China without delay. The recommendations included applying a series of measures, called a systems approach, across the soybean supply chain and in China to effectively reduce plant pest risk. In December 2017, China accepted USDA's recommendations, ensuring the continued export of U.S. soybeans valued at \$14.4 billion annually.

What will the systems approach include?

The systems approach for U.S. soybeans will begin at the farm level, continue through U.S. export terminals, and extend into China's ports of arrival. Specifically, it will include:

1. Production and harvesting measures designed to reduce weed seed contamination in U.S. soybeans;
2. Soybean sampling and foreign material analysis by USDA to monitor for weed seeds in China-bound U.S. bulk and container shipments;
3. Notifying China when a soybean shipment exceeds 1 percent foreign material by placing an additional declaration on the official phytosanitary certificate that says "this consignment exceeds 1 percent foreign material;" and
4. Possible inspection, cleaning, treatment or other protective measures by China to mitigate pest risk.

Who will be responsible for implementing the systems approach?

Participants across the U.S. grain supply chain and in China will be responsible for implementing the systems approach.

On Farm: USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), working with federal, state, and university experts, will develop specific recommendations based on weed seed control best practices. The recommendations will include production and harvesting measures designed to reduce weed seed contamination at the farm level. APHIS will provide these recommendations to U.S. soybean producers before the 2018 growing season begins.

At Export: USDA's Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) will sample China-bound soybean shipments and analyze foreign material to monitor for weed seeds in U.S. bulk and container shipments. When FGIS determines that a consignment exceeds 1 percent foreign material, APHIS will include an additional declaration on the phytosanitary certificate that says: "This consignment exceeds 1 percent foreign material." This action will allow all U.S. soybean exports to China to continue without interruption until the United States is able to fully implement the other parts of the systems approach during the 2018 crop year.

In China: China's General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) has agreed to expedite agricultural clearance of shipments with 1 percent or less foreign material. They will determine whether any phytosanitary measures including inspection, cleaning, treatment or other protective actions may be appropriate to mitigate pest risk in shipments with more than 1 percent foreign material. AQSIQ will not hold or unnecessarily delay incoming shipments based solely on the volume of foreign material.

When will the United States and China implement the systems approach?

The United States and China will begin implementing the systems approach on January 1, 2018, starting with USDA including an additional declaration on the phytosanitary certificate for China-bound shipments of U.S. soybeans that have more than 1 percent foreign material. This action will allow all U.S. soybean exports

to China to continue without interruption until the United States is able to fully implement the other parts of the systems approach during the 2018 crop year.

What is China's standard for foreign material?

China's standard for foreign material is 1 percent.

What will China do when it receives a U.S. soybean shipment that has an additional declaration on the phytosanitary certificate indicating that there is more than 1 percent foreign material?

China will determine whether shipments with more than 1 percent foreign material may need additional inspection, cleaning, treatment, or other protective measures. China also may require importers to have a compliance agreement to manage phytosanitary risk. China will not hold or unnecessarily delay incoming U.S. shipments based solely on the volume of foreign material.

What about U.S. soybean shipments with 1 percent or less foreign material?

For those shipments that have 1 percent or less foreign material, APHIS will issue a standard phytosanitary certificate without an additional declaration, and China has agreed to expedite agricultural clearance of those shipments.

What information does an exporter need to provide APHIS to obtain a phytosanitary certificate?

The exporter must provide APHIS with a copy of Form 921-2 from FGIS indicating whether the shipment exceeds 1 percent foreign material.

Did China set a maximum limit for the volume of foreign material they will accept in U.S. shipments?

No, China did not set a maximum limit for foreign material.

Must all U.S. soybean shipments exported to China be accompanied by a phytosanitary certificate?

All soybean exports to China, including consignments from small volume exporters, must be accompanied by an official phytosanitary certificate from APHIS. To obtain a phytosanitary certificate, the exporter must request Form 921-2 from FGIS indicating whether the shipment exceeds 1 percent foreign material.

Does the requirement to include an additional declaration for shipments that have more than 1 percent foreign material apply to container and bagged shipments of U.S. soybeans to China?

Yes, the requirement to include an additional declaration for shipments that have more than 1 percent foreign

material applies to bulk, container, and bagged consignments.

Does the requirement to include an additional declaration for shipments that have more than 1 percent foreign material apply to consignments that leave the United States before January 1, 2018?

Consignments of U.S. soybeans to China that leave the United States before January 1, 2018, are not subject to this requirement.

Does China require U.S. exporters shipping soybeans to China to be registered?

Yes, China requires all companies exporting any commodity to that country to be registered. To meet this requirement for grain commodities, FGIS developed a list of all U.S. soybean exporters who ship to China. The list includes facilities that are required by FGIS to register under the U.S. Grain Standards Act as well as facilities that ship less than 15,000 metric tons and are exempt from FGIS registration. FGIS provided the list to China in December. A copy is available on the FGIS web site. FGIS will periodically update the list.

When will the USDA-recommended best practices for weed control at the farm level be available?

USDA is consulting with federal, state, and university experts to determine effective production, harvesting and other measures that should be used at the farm level to reduce weed seed contamination in soybeans. We will provide specific recommendations before the 2018 soybean growing season begins.

How will participants across the grain supply chain get information about the components of the systems approach?

USDA will work with federal and state agencies that facilitate grain exports, Extension, and affected industry stakeholder groups to create broad awareness about the systems approach. Interested stakeholders also are encouraged to subscribe to APHIS' Stakeholder Registry for the latest updates.

How and when will China determine if the systems approach is effective?

Officials from USDA-APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine and China's General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine will evaluate the effectiveness of the systems approach in December 2019, with a mid-point assessment in December 2018.