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Shipping Plants, Food, and Other Agricultural Items via Express Courier

Last Modified:

Today, it is common to purchase, send, and receive items from around the world. However, s
foreign countries into the United States could pose a risk to U.S. agriculture or the environment. That’s because they could harbor an invasive pest or disease. Mailing or shipping plants or other agricultural items from areas within the United States under Federal or State quarantine for an invasive pest or disease could also spread these threats to new areas.

You Are the “Importer of Record”

As a package’s intended recipient, you are considered the official importer of record and are
for it. The package may be seized and destroyed at the port of entry by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) inspectors; you may also face steep fines under applicable USDA regulations. To avoid such outcomes, follow the guidelines below for sending products from outside the U.S. mainland and within the United States via express courier.

Shipping Agricultural Items from Another Country

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Plants and Plant Products

Restricted or Prohibited Items

The following items may be restricted or prohibited from entering the United States:

- Plants and seeds for planting
- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Dried and processed plant products (e.g., rice, herbs, citrus peel, handicrafts)

Importing Plants and Plant Parts

Various import restrictions also apply to most fresh fruits, vegetables, and many dried or processed plant products that can harbor pests, depending on the country of origin.

For incoming shipments of plants and seeds meant for planting, phytosanitary certificates from the country of export show that the shipment is free of plant pests and diseases we don't want in the United States. In general, anyone wishing to import plants and seeds for planting, as well as certain other plant products, must obtain a phytosanitary certificate for each shipment and an import permit issued by APHIS. To view import requirements for a specific commodity from a specific country, visit the Agricultural Commodity Import Requirements database.

Learn How To Import Plants and Plant Products

For general questions:

Plant Permits Team

Email: plantproducts.permits@usda.gov

Phone: 877-770-5990

Buying and Selling Plants and Seeds Online

For incoming shipments of plants and seeds meant for planting, phytosanitary certificates from the country of export show that the shipment is free of plant pests and diseases we don't want in the United States. In general, anyone wishing to import plants and seeds for planting, as well as certain other plant products, must obtain a phytosanitary certificate for each shipment and an import permit issued by APHIS. To view import requirements for a specific commodity from a specific country, visit the Agricultural Commodity Import Requirements database.

Learn More About Buying Plants and Seeds Online

Learn More About Selling Plants and Seeds Online

For general questions:

Plant Permits Team

Email: plantproducts.permits@usda.gov

Phone: 877-770-5990

Plant Pests and Soil

Restricted or Prohibited Items

The following items may be restricted or prohibited from entering the United States:

- Plant pests, such as live insects and snails, including their eggs
- Soil

Importing Plant Pests

A permit is required for the importation, interstate movement. and environmental release of plant pests (plant- feeding insects, mites, snails, slugs, isopods, and plant pathogenic bacteria, viruses, fungi, etc.), biological control organisms of plant pests and weeds, bees, parasitic plants, and federally listed noxious weeds.

Learn More About How To Import Plant Pests

Questions?

For questions about permits for regulated organisms and soil:

Pest Permits Team

Email: pest.permits@usda.gov

Phone: 301-851-2285

Alt-Phone: 866-524-5421

Buying Invertebrate Pets

Please contact APHIS before buying a land-dwelling invertebrate, such as snails, insects, isopods, scorpions, and spiders. You might need a permit to buy it, or the invertebrate might be illegal because it could pose a danger to U.S. agriculture or the environment.

Learn More About Importing Invertebrate Pets

Soil

Soil is strictly regulated by APHIS' Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program because it can easily provide a pathway for the introduction of a variety of dangerous organisms into the United States.

Importation of soil into the United States from foreign sources is normally prohibited but may be authorized under a permit (PPQ Form 525-A) under strict conditions,

safeguards, and controlled circumstances. In addition, soil movement within the United States is restricted unless authorized by APHIS under specific conditions, safeguards, and controlled circumstances described in a permit and/or compliance agreement.

Learn More About the Requirements for Importing or Moving Soil within the United States

For questions about permits for regulated organisms and soil:

Pest Permits Team

Email: pest.permits@usda.gov

Phone: 301-851-2285

Alt-Phone: 866-524-5421

Animals, Animal Products, and Animal Byproducts from Another Country

Restricted or Prohibited Items

The following items may be restricted or prohibited from entering the United States:

- Meats, eggs, milk, and other animal products for human consumption
- Pet food, chews and treats, and animal feed, as well as hides, bones, feathers, and hunting trophies from certain animals
- Animal byproducts, including pharmaceuticals, research samples, and materials for industrial use
- Live animals (including pet birds)
- Hatching eggs
- Certain species of freshwater fish (including koi and goldfish)
- Germplasm
- Any livestock or poultry pathogen or material that could contain or spread a pathogen

Importing Animals and Animal Products

Live animals and their products and byproducts can transmit many diseases harmful to U.S. poultry or livestock populations. Examples of these diseases include highly pathogenic avian influenza, African swine fever, Newcastle disease, foot-and-mouth disease, bovine spongiform encephalopathy, swine vesicular disease, and classical swine fever. As a result, regulated live animal species, and animal products and byproducts from foreign countries, often need USDA permits and/or proper Government certification to meet U.S. import requirements. Note that other U.S. Government agencies—such as the Food and Drug Administration, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, etc.—may also have import requirements for an animal-derived product or byproduct.

Learn More About Importing Animal and Animal Products

Questions?

For questions about import permits or permit applications:

Live Animal Import Permit Team

Email: laipermits@usda.gov

Phone: 301-851-3300

For general requests, such as permit applications and import requirements:

Animal Product Import and Export Team

Email: apie@usda.gov

Phone: 301-851-3300

Note:

Email is preferred.

Buying and Selling Animal Products

Imported animal products for human consumption, such as meat and poultry products, must originate from a USDA-approved facility. Certain meat, poultry, and egg products must also meet the import requirements of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) in addition to APHIS' requirements. Review FSIS' import requirements and see a list of approved establishments by country.

Export certificates are issued by the appropriate government entity of the country of origin. This document certifies that the animal product originates from a region of the country that is free from pest(s) or disease(s) of concern or has not transited an area or region of a country that is affected with an animal disease of concern or has been produced or processed in a manner to mitigate any introduction of animal disease into the United States.

Learn How To Import Animal Products

Questions?

For general requests, such as permit applications and import requirements:

Animal Product Import and Export Team

Email: apie@usda.gov

Phone: 301-851-3300

Note:

Email is preferred.

Sending Food and Agricultural Products from Puerto Ri
Islands, and Hawaii to the U.S. Mainland

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Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands

USDA prohibits or restricts the interstate movement of many agricultural products from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands into the U.S. mainland, including most fresh fruits and vegetables, certain types of plants and flowers, and certain pork and pork products. That’s because these items could harbor a dangerous stowaway—an invasive pest or disease. Just one piece of fruit or a single plant—or a pork product—that is carrying an invasive pest or disease could cause millions of dollars in damage and lead to expensive eradication efforts, lost trade revenue, and higher food prices.

Learn What You Can Ship from Puerto Rico or the U.S. Virgin Islands to the U.S. Mainland

Questions?

USDA Offices in Puerto Rico:

Aguada: (787) 986-7240
Aguadilla: (787) 931–7900
Carolina: (787) 710-7443 or (787) 710-7282
Ponce: (787) 709-4957
San Juan: (787) 919-0585

U.S. Customs and Border Protection offices in the U.S. Virgin Islands:

St. Thomas: (340) 774-4554
St. Croix: (340) 778-1696

Hawaii

USDA prohibits or restricts the movement of many agricultural products from Hawaii into the U.S. mainland, including most fresh fruits and vegetables and certain types

of plants and flowers. That’s because these items could harbor a dangerous stowaway—an invasive pest or disease. Just one piece of fruit or a single plant that is carrying an invasive pest or disease could cause millions of dollars in damage and lead to expensive eradication efforts, lost trade revenue, and higher food prices.

Learn What You Can Ship from Hawaii to the U.S. Mainland

Questions?

To learn whether you can ship an item from Hawaii to the U.S. mainland, contact one of these USDA offices in Hawaii:

Honolulu: (808) 834-3220
Kona: (808) 326-1252
Kauai: (808) 632-2511
Hilo: (808) 933-6930
Maui: (808) 877-5261

For information on how to certify plants and cuttings, contact the Hawaii Department of Agriculture:

Honolulu: (808) 832-0566
Hilo: (808) 974-4141
Kauai: (808) 241-7135
Maui: (808) 872-3848
Kona: (808) 326-1077

Shipping Agricultural Items Within the United States

Never mail or ship plants or other agricultural items from areas within the United States unde quarantine for an invasive pest or you may spread them to new areas. This is especially true for homegrown produce you may wish to share with family or friends. Call your local USDA office to learn whether any quarantines apply to your shipment.

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