

**International Trade Data System  
Frequently Asked Questions  
September 2015**

**The International Trade Data System and the Automated Commercial Environment**

**Q. What is the International Trade Data System (ITDS)?**

A. Today, there are 48 government agencies that, together, require nearly 200 different forms to process imports and exports. The current process is largely paper-based and requires information to be entered into multiple electronic systems. As a result, importers and exporters must often submit the same data to multiple agencies at multiple times. The International Trade Data System (ITDS) is a government-wide initiative to eliminate these multiple paper-based processes and create a single system that will allow companies and customs brokers to submit their information once to a single system. This “single window” concept will eliminate redundancy, dramatically reduce paper usage and operational costs, and facilitate faster, more efficient processing of imports and exports.

**Q. What is the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE)?**

A. The Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) is the system through which the “single window” will be realized. It will be the primary system the international trade community will use to submit import and export data and communicate with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and other participating government agencies. CBP and its partner government agencies will use ACE to collect, track, and process required trade information to determine the admissibility of shipments.

**Q. Is the mandatory implementation date for ACE changing?**

A. Yes. By October 31, 2015, all major ACE capabilities for filing partner government agency entry summary and cargo release data will be deployed at ports across the nation. However, based on input from brokers, importers and carriers, CBP and its Federal partners are providing industry with more time to update their business processes and software to transition to ACE. As a result, we are updating our November 1, milestone when all electronic filings would have been required to go through ACE to provide industry with greater flexibility. The hard work and momentum already underway will continue, and CBP and its Federal partners will closely monitor industry adoption and system performance rates in advance of a new February 27, 2016 transition milestone when ACE will become the only system used for submission of trade data.

Although hybrid— paper or electronic—filing will be supported during the transition, we encourage all members of the trade industry to begin using ACE as soon as possible to electronically file the most common import transactions to have the maximum amount of time to adapt to the new system.

**Q. How long will hybrid filing be allowed?**

A. By July 2016, CBP and its Federal partners will seek to implement a “no hybrid policy” policy. At this time, all APHIS import documents, with the exception of government-to-government certifications and import documents for live animals must be filed through ACE.

**Q. Can I still use the Automated Commercial System (ACS) before February 27, 2016?**

A. You can use ACS until February 27, 2016. After this date, ACS will not be available and all import entry filings must be submitted through ACE. Importers and brokers participating in APHIS' Lacey Act pilot will be required to start filing through ACE as early as September 2015.

**Q. Is ITDS only for imports?**

A. ITDS covers both imports and exports; however, only APHIS import data will be entered into ACE. APHIS does not have any plans to process exports through ACE at this time.

**Q. Which imports are subject to filing in ACE?**

A. All imported shipments are subject to entry filing in ACE. If an importer self-files by submitting paper documents, CBP will enter the data into ACE.

**APHIS' Implementation of ITDS**

**Q. Will APHIS be ready when ITDS becomes mandatory on February 27, 2016?**

A. Yes. APHIS is committed to fostering trade and streamlining our processes to improve efficiencies and we will be ready to fully implement new ACE processes by the February 27, 2016 deadline.

**Q. What is the status of APHIS' pilot projects?**

A. APHIS' Lacey Act pilot began in September 2015. All other APHIS program pilots will begin in October 2015. APHIS will issue a Federal Register notice in advance of these pilots soliciting stakeholder participants to test the filing process.

**Obtaining and Submitting Trade Documents Required By APHIS**

**Q. Will ITDS change the way importers obtain permits and licenses from APHIS?**

Agricultural product importers will continue to come to APHIS to apply for and obtain permits and licenses as they always have.

**Q. How will ITDS change the way importers and their business representatives (brokers, carriers, and filers) submit trade documents required by APHIS to CBP?**

A. Currently, growers, producers, and importers provide trade documents and related information required by APHIS to their business representative (broker, carrier, or filer) who then submits that information to CBP through various means. Beginning on February 27, 2016, business representatives will be responsible for submitting APHIS-required documents to CBP in one of three ways, depending on the type of document.

**1. Electronic submission of cargo release and entry summary data through ACE.**

Brokers, filers and carriers must submit cargo release and entry summary data electronically in ACE following the [guidelines](#) provided on the CBP website to meet digital coding requirements for APHIS trade documents.

**2. Electronic submission of certain forms through the Document Imaging System (DIS).** Some forms, such as Veterinary Services' (VS) Declaration of Importation or

Application for Inspection and Dipping forms, will be accepted through the DIS. The [list of available DIS forms](#) is on the CBP website.

3. **Paper submission of government certifications.** Because most foreign trading partners do not yet have the capability to provide electronic certification, APHIS and CBP will continue to accept government-to-government certifications in paper format.

**Q. If I don't have a broker or business representative who can submit trade documents on my behalf, can I still import agricultural products or live animals?**

A. A broker is not required for importing formal, informal, or express courier shipments. Importers can choose to self-file by providing paper documentation to CBP personnel at ports of entry who will manually file those documents in ACE. However, use of a broker is encouraged because the self-file process may result in longer clearance times for shipments.

**Q. Do all import trade documents required by APHIS need to be submitted through ACE?**

A. All documents required by APHIS for entry need to be submitted through ACE. These documents can be filed by a broker, filer, or business representative, or the importer can self-file by providing the documents directly to CBP at the port of entry. Government-to-government certifications and certain documents required by VS for live animal imports will continue to be accepted in paper format.

### **ITDS and the Lacey Act**

**Q. Can I still use the Lacey Act Web Governance System (LAWGS) after February 27, 2016 to submit my Lacey Act declarations?**

A. Beginning on November 1, 2015, importers and their business representatives should use ACE to file Lacey Act declarations. However, importers without a broker and small businesses with low import volumes may continue to file Lacey Act declarations in LAWGS after February 27, 2016.

**Q. Can I still submit a paper Lacey Act declaration after February 27, 2016?**

A. Yes. If you are unable to submit your Lacey Act declaration through ACE or LAWGS, you may continue to send paper declarations to APHIS after February 27, 2016.

**Q. If I participate in the Lacey Act pilot, will I be required to submit my Lacey Act declarations through both ACE and ACS during the pilot phase?**

A. Lacey Act pilot volunteers will be required to file declarations through ACE only.

**Q. Who can I contact if I have questions about submitting a Lacey Act declaration through ACE or LAWGS?**

A. If you have questions about how to submit a Lacey Act declaration through LAWGS or ACE, send an email to [Lacey.Act.Declaration@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:Lacey.Act.Declaration@aphis.usda.gov) or the APHIS Core Team for ACE/ITDS Implementation at [ACE.ITDS@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:ACE.ITDS@aphis.usda.gov).

### **Contact information and ITDS and ACE Resources**

**Q. Who should I call if I encounter technical problems when using ACE?**

A. If you encounter problems when filing in ACE, call your local CBP Client Representative. If a Client Representative has not been assigned to you, you may contact the Client Representative Outreach line at 571-468-5500.

If you have questions about your portal account or problems accessing the portal, call the ACE Help Desk at 1-866-530-4172 or email [ACE.Support@cbp.dhs.gov](mailto:ACE.Support@cbp.dhs.gov).

If you have general questions about ACE, email [askACE@cbp.dhs.gov](mailto:askACE@cbp.dhs.gov).

**Q. Who can I contact if I have questions about ITDS implementation?**

A. If you have questions related to APHIS' implementation of ITDS, email the APHIS Core Team for ACE/ITDS Implementation at [ACE.ITDS@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:ACE.ITDS@aphis.usda.gov). If you have general questions about the implementation of ITDS, call the ACE Help Desk at 1-866-530-4172 or email [ACE.Support@cbp.dhs.gov](mailto:ACE.Support@cbp.dhs.gov).

**Q. Are there any opportunities for stakeholders to learn more about ITDS before it is implemented?**

A. CBP has developed a number of online resources, including:

- [CBP Trade Community](#)
- [ACE and Automated Systems](#)
- [ACE Training and Reference Guides](#)
- [CBP Outreach Events for the Trade Community](#)
- [International Trade Data System](#)
- [Document Imaging System](#)

You can also find details of upcoming outreach events and the latest information about APHIS' implementation of ITDS on the [APHIS Web site](#).