



**USDA United States Department of Agriculture**  
**Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service**

*protecting the health and value of American agriculture and natural resources*



## United States and Canada Announce Regulatory Partnership Statements and Animal and Plant Health Work Plans

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In February 2011, President Obama and Canadian Prime Minister Harper announced the formation of the Canada-United States Regulatory Cooperation Council (RCC) as a mechanism to promote ongoing regulatory cooperation and alignment between our two countries. The goal is to develop more effective regulatory approaches to facilitate trade and economic growth in a number of sectors while continuing to protect the health and safety of our citizens. The initial Joint Action Plan and additional information about the projects initiated under the first phase of the RCC can be found at [www.trade.gov/rcc](http://www.trade.gov/rcc).

On August 27, 2014, the RCC released the Joint Forward Plan that describes the accomplishments under the first phase of the RCC and outlines the next phase of work. RCC-2 will move from a focus on individual initiatives toward the development of permanent and ongoing departmental regulatory partnerships and continuing stakeholder engagement.

Today, the RCC published Regulatory Partnership Statements that outline the mechanisms for ongoing regulatory cooperation, as well as work plans describing the new initiatives planned for RCC-2. The United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) have been working closely to develop five new work plans under phase 2 of RCC:

#### **Animal Health Work Plans:**

**FAD zoning:** The United States and Canada have agreed to recognize each other's zoning decisions when a foreign animal disease (FAD) outbreak occurs, to facilitate trade between disease-free zones. APHIS and CFIA published a Guidance Framework for implementing this initiative in 2014. Under RCC-2, the agencies intend to finalize the Framework consultation process, evaluate the use of the Framework for avian influenza outbreaks in both countries, and work toward developing modeling tools to inform certain zoning decisions.

**Electronic certification:** Animal health certificates are official documents issued by the exporting country to provide the importing country with documentation that consignments of animals, animal products, and other regulated articles meet specified import requirements. Under RCC-2, APHIS and CFIA will work toward implementing mechanisms to allow the electronic exchange of animal health certificates between the United States and Canada. Electronic exchange would increase the efficiency of the process, improve reporting, enhance security during transmission, and reduce the opportunity for fraudulent activity.

**Plant Health Work Plans:**

**Post-entry quarantine:** Certain plant taxa from designated countries must be grown under specific post-entry quarantine (PEQ) conditions to be eligible for importation into the United States. The goal of this project is to establish a process that meets U.S. phytosanitary import requirements but allows the quarantine to take place in Canada prior to export.

**ISPM 15:** Wood packaging material (WPM) moving between the U.S. and Canada is currently exempt from the requirements of the International Standard for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM) 15: *Regulations of Wood Packaging Materials in International Trade* (ISPM 15). APHIS and CFIA have agreed to remove this exemption to provide greater protection against movement of pests like the Asian longhorned beetle and the emerald ash borer. Implementation of ISPM-15 provisions in the U.S and Canada will follow publication of a U.S. Federal Rule removing the exemption. The RCC work plan outlines the harmonized implementation plan for a phased-in approach that emphasizes compliance promotion in order to minimize trade impacts.

**Electronic Certification:** Phytosanitary certificates are official documents issued by the exporting country to provide the importing country with documentation that consignments of plants, plant products or other regulated articles meet specified import requirements. The electronic exchange of certificates (e-Cert) would increase the efficiency of this process, improve reporting, enhance security of the transmission of certificates, and reduce the opportunity for fraudulent activity. Under RCC-2, APHIS and CFIA will work toward implementing a mechanism to allow the electronic exchange of phytosanitary certificates (e-Phyto) between Canada and the United States. Both countries will identify the technical options required for e-Cert data exchange and consider initiating a trial to transmit phytosanitary certificates electronically.

**Next steps:** APHIS and USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service will host a Webinar to provide additional information on the Regulatory Partnership Statements and work plans, and to provide stakeholders an opportunity to ask questions. We will share more details about the Webinar in the next couple of weeks. In addition, the working groups for each work plan will follow up with listening sessions or other engagement opportunities to gather stakeholder input on the individual projects.

If you have questions, please contact:

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