

FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION
DA-2019-07
May 20, 2019

Subject: APHIS Amends Entry Requirements for Imports of Okra from the State of Tamaulipas, Mexico into the United States

To: State and Territory Agricultural Regulatory Officials

Effective immediately, USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is amending entry requirements for the importation of okra from the State of Tamaulipas, Mexico, arriving in the United States between May 16 and November 30. Importers may ship okra from Tamaulipas with a phytosanitary certificate, issued by Mexico's national plant protection organization, verifying that the okra was grown and transported only within Tamaulipas and that the shipment is free from pink bollworm (*Pectinophora gossypiella*; PBW). Furthermore, this okra may only enter through Texas at the ports of Brownsville, Progreso, Hidalgo, Rio Grande City, Roma, or Laredo. Okra from other states in Mexico, arriving between May 16 and November 30, must be fumigated. In addition, okra from Tamaulipas without the required certificate, or entering at a port not bordering Tamaulipas, must be fumigated.

APHIS is taking these actions to prevent the introduction of PBW, a serious pest of cotton, into the United States while allowing an additional option for the importation of okra from Tamaulipas. In 2018, USDA declared eradication of PBW in commercial cotton-producing areas of the United States. Mexico has actively engaged in eradication efforts with much success along the U.S.-Mexico border, and these efforts have contributed to low PBW populations in Tamaulipas. Mexico has also implemented additional safeguarding measures resulting in reduced risk of PBW interception in okra produced in Tamaulipas and imported into the United States.

Prior to PBW eradication in the United States, APHIS required okra entering Texas from Tamaulipas between May 16 and November 30, the period of greatest risk for PBW infestation, to either be fumigated or, after entering the United States, inspected and issued a limited permit for transport to approved locations within the United States. Limited permits will no longer be an option to move okra from Mexico.

The attached Federal Order outlines the requirements for the import of okra from Tamaulipas. For additional information regarding this program, please contact Senior Regulatory Specialist Marc Phillips at 301-851-2114 or Marc.Phillips@usda.gov.



Osama El-Lissy
Deputy Administrator
Plant Protection and Quarantine

Attachment: Federal Order

FEDERAL ORDER

APHIS Amends Requirements for Okra Imported from the State of Tamaulipas, Mexico, into the United States to Prevent the Entry of Pink Bollworm

DA-2019-07
May 20, 2019

Effective immediately, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is revising the entry requirements for the importation of okra (*Abelmoschus esculentus*) produced in the State of Tamaulipas, Mexico, to prevent the entry or introduction into the United States of the insect pest pink bollworm (*Pectinophora gossypiella*; PBW).

This Federal Order modifies the entry requirements for okra from Tamaulipas, Mexico arriving between May 16 and November 30 into the ports of Brownsville, Progreso, Hidalgo, Rio Grande City, Roma, or Laredo, Texas to require a phytosanitary certificate that includes an additional declaration from Mexico's plant protection organization verifying the okra was grown and only transported within Tamaulipas and that the shipment is free from PBW. Okra from other states in Mexico, arriving between May 16 and November 30 must be fumigated. In addition, okra from Tamaulipas without the required phytosanitary certificate, or arriving at a port other than Brownsville, Progreso, Hidalgo, Rio Grande City, Roma, or Laredo, Texas, must be fumigated. This action is necessary because the Administrator has determined that the introduction and establishment of PBW poses a serious threat to agriculture grown in the United States. These import requirements are needed and warranted to address plant pest risks associated with okra from Mexico.

PBW is a serious pest of cotton. Okra is a host of PBW and a pathway for PBW into the United States. In 2018, APHIS lifted the PBW domestic quarantine in all cotton-producing areas of the United States (Federal Order DA-2018-35). Prior to the United States declaring eradication of PBW in commercial cotton-producing areas and removing the interstate movement restrictions of PBW host material, the import regulations required okra entering Texas from Tamaulipas between May 16 and November 30 to be either fumigated for PBW or subject to the interstate movement requirements of 7 CFR 301.52, which included inspections of the okra shipments and issuance of limited permits for movement to approved locations within the United States as detailed in 7 CFR 301.52-3. Limited permits for interstate movements will not be an option to move okra from Mexico to approved locations within the United States.

Over the past decade, the United States and Mexico have implemented significant eradication efforts in the Mexican State of Tamaulipas, resulting in low populations of PBW in Tamaulipas-produced okra and low interception rates in okra produced in Tamaulipas and imported into the United States. To recognize this ongoing and successful partnership that has reduced populations of PBW, APHIS will accept, between May 16 and November 30 (the period of greatest risk for PBW infestation), okra shipments from the State of Tamaulipas with the required phytosanitary certificate issued by the national plant protection organization of Mexico. The phytosanitary

certificate must include an additional declaration that the okra was grown and only transported within Tamaulipas and the shipment is free from PBW. APHIS limits the U.S. ports of entries for these shipments of Tamaulipas-produced okra to Brownsville, Progreso, Hidalgo, Rio Grande City, Roma, or Laredo, Texas. APHIS is taking these actions to prevent the introduction of PBW into the United States.

This Federal Order is issued in accordance with the regulatory authority provided by the Plant Protection Act of June 20, 2000, as amended, Section 412(a), 7 U.S.C. 7712(a). Under the Act, the Secretary may prohibit or restrict the importation, entry, exportation, or movement in interstate commerce of any plant, plant product, biological control organism, noxious weed, article, or means of conveyance, if the Secretary determines that the prohibition or restriction is necessary to prevent the introduction into the United States or the dissemination of a plant pest or noxious weed within the United States. The regulatory authority provided by 7 U.S.C. 7754 allows the Secretary to issue orders to carry out this provision of the Plant Protection Act.