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News Release

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USDA Announces the Grand Opening of Atlanta’s New Plant Inspection Station

WASHINGTON, Nov. 7, 2013 – The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) today announced the grand opening of Atlanta’s newly-expanded plant inspection station.

“To keep up with the increasing volume of fresh cut flowers and live plants imported into the United States, APHIS’ Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program has built a state-of-the-art hub,” said Osama El-Lissy, Deputy Administrator of PPQ. “This expansion will expedite shipment processing by allowing for the simultaneous inspection of multiple shipments, making it just one example of USDA’s overall effort to facilitate and expand trade with our partners worldwide.”

Features of the new plant inspection station include an operations control center to ensure the safety of entering agricultural products, water saving and energy conservation fixtures, and laboratories and inspection rooms that exceed current engineering and safety requirements.

The Atlanta Plant Inspection Station, established in 2005, is one of 16 such facilities located at major ports of entry across the United States. It is currently the nation’s second-busiest point of entry (behind Miami) for foreign-grown flowers, ornamental shrubs, and other plant material. Since 2005, plant cargo into Atlanta has increased from fewer than 4 million plant imports to more than 200 million plants.

In today’s global marketplace, the volume of international trade brings increased potential for the introduction of foreign pests, diseases, and noxious weeds that could threaten American agriculture and natural resources. The results of such introductions can have a devastating effect on the U.S. food supply and cost hundreds of millions of dollars in eradication and control measures. This ultimately can result in higher priced agricultural products for the consumer. In fiscal year 2012 alone, more than 1.3 billion plants were imported into the United States. Each of these imports goes through a series of overlapping safeguarding measures prior to U.S. entry.

The Obama Administration, with Agriculture Secretary Vilsack's leadership, has aggressively worked to expand export opportunities and reduce barriers to trade, helping to push agricultural exports to record levels. U.S. agriculture is currently experiencing its best period in history thanks to the productivity, resiliency, and resourcefulness of our producers and agribusinesses. Today, net farm income is at record levels while debt has been cut in half since the 1980s. Overall, American agriculture supports 1 in 12 jobs in the United States and provides American consumers with 83 percent of the food they consume. Strong agricultural exports contribute to a positive U.S. trade balance, create jobs, boost economic growth and support President Obama's National Export Initiative goal of doubling all U.S. exports by the end of 2014.

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