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**Agricultural Quarantine Inspection**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program and the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Customs and Border Protection (CBP) safeguard U.S. agricultural and natural resources from the introduction of invasive pests and diseases through the Agricultural Quarantine Inspection (AQI) program. PPQ assesses the risks associated with international trade and specific imported agricultural products and develops import regulations to exclude foreign pests and diseases and protect U.S. agriculture.

In addition, the Agency conducts off-shore pest risk reduction activities including foreign commodity pre-clearance programs; trains agricultural inspectors and detector dog teams to work at U.S. ports of entry; inspects and takes action as necessary on imported plant propagative materials; monitors the fumigation of arriving containers and cargo to mitigate pest risks; conducts trade compliance activities to detect violations of PPQ’ import regulations and prevent smuggling; and provides the scientific
support necessary to carry out these activities and those carried out by CBP, including, among other things, the authoritative and timely identification of pests necessary to determine whether regulatory actions on imported products are required.

Pre-Clearance and Offshore Risk Reduction

One of the most effective ways to facilitate the safe movement of commodities into the United States is to address pest threats where they originate. In FY 2021, PPQ inspected and precleared 3.7 billion pounds of 76 different fresh fruits and vegetables from 21 countries. Additionally, PPQ inspected 3.4 billion pounds of avocados in Mexico as a part of a systems approach to facilitate safe trade. PPQ has overseen this program since 1997, and through 66 PPQ-certified facilities, the program accounts for about 90 percent of avocado imports to the United States.

PPQ also precleared 1.85 million pounds of cut flowers, bulbs, and perennials from Chile and 25 million bulbs and perennials from the Netherlands. There were zero pest interceptions detected at the U.S. ports of entry. This offshore work, which importers fully fund, allows inspected and precleared perishable products to enter through the U.S. ports of entry without delay.

To help the U.S. military prevent the spread of foreign animal diseases and plant pests, PPQ worked with DOD to inspect 9,070 shipments of personal goods (4,293 household goods, 1,926 unaccompanied baggage, and 2,851 vehicles) and 330,678 pieces of cargo from 18 countries before they returned stateside. PPQ completed annual evaluations and recertifications of 46 military preclearance programs in 8 countries in Europe and Africa, ensuring that these programs meet all administrative, programmatic, and safeguarding requirements. Using virtual meeting platforms due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, PPQ trained 93 military service members to manage these programs locally in Europe and Africa.
PPQ conducts certain inspections and certifications overseas to verify that treatment or production facilities meet our standards and regulatory requirements to help protect U.S. plant health from pests that could move into our country with high-demand, large volume commodity imports. In FY 2021, PPQ certified or recertified 171 treatment facilities, including 72 facilities in Mexico, 6 facilities in Central America, 15 facilities in Caribbean, 74 facilities in South America, and 4 facilities in Asia. PPQ is currently tracking 248 offshore treatment facilities in 19 countries. Among the most common mitigation types are hot water treatment (116 active facilities) and methyl bromide fumigation (52 active facilities).

PPQ also certified 11 irradiation facilities. PPQ successfully launched the implementation of the Offshore Greenhouse Certification Program (OGCP) in FY 2021. PPQ worked with the nursery industry to design, test, and implement OGCP to effectively minimize pest risks in live plant cuttings and expedite clearance at U.S. ports of entry. OGCP will help U.S. producers access varieties of healthy plants they need to be competitive in the global marketplace while protecting U.S. plant health from the introduction of harmful plant pests.

**Risk Analysis and Methods Development for Pest Exclusion**

PPQ develops pest risk analyses and epidemiological approaches to support and improve pest exclusion programs and decision making. In FY 2021, PPQ completed approximately 278 risk analyses associated with imports, exports, invasive pest threats, and other programmatic requirements. This total includes 44 analyses to open, expand, or maintain export markets for U.S. producers and 50 risk assessments for import requests from foreign countries.
The laboratory’s work also included evaluations of 11 newly detected pests by the New Pest Advisory Group, 7 pathway analyses and spread models, 4 economic analyses supporting operational and policy decisions, and 11 New Pest Response Guidelines for preparedness purposes. These products identify potentially harmful plant pests and diseases and help PPQ decide what mitigating actions to take in order to prevent their entry into or limit their spread or economic impact within the United States.