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Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance

Last Modified:

The mission of PPQ's Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance (SITC) program is to stop the entry and distribution of prohibited or restricted foreign agricultural goods. These goods could harbor invasive pests and diseases that could devastate U.S. agriculture and natural resources.

SITC uses a variety of survey, analytical, and intelligence tools to monitor the movement of agricultural goods throughout the United States. Our officers and analysts conduct risk-based inspections, import data analysis, and outreach to industry and the public to ensure agricultural goods are imported safely and legally.

SITC officers work across the country to carry out this mission, checking wholesale markets, distribution points, retail stores, restaurants, and the internet to look for restricted or prohibited agricultural commodities. We also partner with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and other government agencies in anti-smuggling efforts at air, land, and sea ports of entry nationwide.

How You Can Help

Be Aware and Follow Procedures for Importing Agricultural Products

The public contributes significantly to the success of our work. Contact us if you have questions. We can explain what's allowed and the proper procedure to bring agricultural products into the United States from other countries, or to move them interstate.

Once you know the process, follow the procedures, and be sure to double-check the regulations before each shipment. Pest and disease situations can change rapidly—just because something was eligible for import once doesn't mean it will be in the future.

Report Suspected Smuggling

If you think something was illegally imported - even if unintentionally - report it to sitc.mail@usda.gov. All submissions are kept anonymous. Your information will not be shared publicly.

When to report:

- If you suspect that a foreign-origin plant or animal product is being sold illegally online (including websites, social media platforms, and mobile applications).
- If you suspect that a foreign-origin plant or animal product is being sold illegally from a U.S.-based location (for example: grocery store, markets, warehouse or club stores, private seller).

Please include the following details:

- Physical location and/or website where the product was found
- Any pictures or screen shots of the product
- The reason why you believe it is foreign-origin and/or not legal to have in the United States
- If you believe you have received illegally imported material (for example, as a gift), please send an email with your name, contact information, and the nature of the product you received. A member of our team will contact you to assist.

Plants and Plant Products

Expand All

Restricted or Prohibited Items

The following items may be restricted or prohibited from entering the United States:

- Plants and seeds for planting
- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Dried and processed plant products (for example: rice, herbs, citrus peel, handicrafts)

Importing Plants and Plant Products

For incoming shipments of plants and seeds meant for planting, phytosanitary certificates from the country of export show that the shipment is free of plant diseases we don’t want in the United States. In general, anyone wishing to import plants and seeds for planting, as well as certain other plant products, must obtain a phytosanitary certificate for each shipment. Anyone wishing to import plants and seeds for planting, as well as certain other plant products, must obtain a phytosanitary certificate for each shipment and a USDA-issued import permit.

Various import restrictions also apply to most fresh fruits, vegetables, and many dried or processed plant products that can harbor pests, depending on the country of origin.

Learn more about importing plants and plant products

Apply for a permit

Buying and Selling Plants and Seeds Online

A person or business located in the United States that buys plants for planting from another country through an e-commerce site is considered an importer. A person or

business that sells plants for planting from another country through an e-commerce site is an exporter.

View the unique responsibilities of buyers (importers) and sellers (exporters), required documents, additional requirements, and prohibited items at How To Buy Plants and Seeds Online.

Questions?

For general questions:

Plant Permits Team

Email: plantproducts.permits@usda.gov

Phone: 877-770-5990

Plant Pests and Soil

Expand All

Restricted or Prohibited Items

The following items may be restricted or prohibited from entering the United States:

- Plant pests, such as live insects and snails, including their eggs
- Soil

Importing Plant Pests

A permit is required for the importation, interstate movement, and environmental release of plant pests (for example: plant-feeding insects, mites, snails, slugs,

isopods, and plant pathogenic bacteria, viruses, fungi), biological control organisms of plant pests and weeds, bees, parasitic plants, and federally listed noxious weeds.

Learn more about importing plant pests

Apply for a permit

Soil

Soil is strictly regulated by APHIS because it can easily provide a pathway for the introduction of a variety of dangerous organisms into the United States.

Importation of soil into the United States from foreign sources is prohibited, and movement within the continental United States is restricted unless authorized by APHIS under specific conditions, safeguards, and controlled circumstances described in a permit, compliance agreement, or both.

Learn more about importing soil

Apply for a permit

Questions?

For questions about permits for regulated organisms and soil:

Pest Permits Team

Email: pest.permits@usda.gov

Phone: 301-851-2285

Alt-Phone: 866-524-5421

Animal, Animal Products, and Animal Byproducts

Expand All

Restricted or Prohibited Items

The following items may be restricted or prohibited from entering the United States:

- Meats, cheeses, and other animal products for human consumption
- Pet food, chews and treats, and animal feed
- Live animals (including pet birds)
- Hatching eggs
- Certain species of freshwater fish (including koi and goldfish)
- Hides, trophies, and racks from certain animals
- Animal byproducts and germplasm

Importing Animals and Animal Products

Live animals and their products and byproducts can transmit many harmful foreign diseases to U.S. poultry or livestock populations. Examples of these diseases include highly pathogenic avian influenza, African swine fever, Newcastle disease, foot-and-mouth disease, bovine spongiform encephalopathy, swine vesicular disease and classical swine fever. As a result, meats, cheeses, extracts, hides, feathers, and other animal products from foreign countries often need USDA permits, proper certification, or both to meet U.S. import requirements.

Learn more about importing animals and animal products.

Apply for a permit

Buying and Selling Animal and Animal Products

Imported animal products for human consumption such as meat, poultry, and processed egg products must originate from a USDA-approved facility and must meet the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service’s (FSIS) requirements in addition to APHIS requirements. For a list of approved establishments by country, please visit

the FSIS website.

Animal Health Certificates are issued by the appropriate government entity of the country of origin. This document certifies that the plant or animal product originates from a region of the country that is free from pest(s) or disease(s) of concern, or has not transited an area or region of a country that is affected with a foreign animal disease of concern, or has been produced or processed in a manner to mitigate any introduction of a foreign animal disease into the United States.

Learn more about importing animals and animal products.

Learn more about exporting animals and animal products.

Questions?

Live Animal Import Permit Team

Contact APHIS' Live Animal Import Permit team if you have questions before you apply for a permit.

For questions about import permits or permit applications:

Live Animal Import Permit Team

Email: laipermits@usda.gov

Phone: 301-851-3300

Animal Product Import and Export

Contact APHIS' Animal Product Import and Export team for questions about current trade restrictions, testing requirements for international trade, importing an animal product into the United States, or transiting an animal product through the United States.

For general requests, such as permit applications and import requirements:

Animal Product Import and Export Team

Email: apie@usda.gov

Phone: 301-851-3300

Note:

Email is preferred.

Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance Contacts

Ants, Isopods, Snails, and Other Invertebrates

Buying Invertebrates

Please contact APHIS' Plant Protection and Quarantine program before buying a land-dwelling invertebrate. You might need a permit to buy it, or the invertebrate might be illegal because it could pose a danger to U.S. agriculture or the environment. Learn more at Invertebrate Pets.

How Pests Spread

To learn about the many ways invasive pests can spread, visit Hungry Pests.

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