Exporter Responsibilities (Plants and Plant Products)

Last Modified:

As an exporter (shipper or agent) of plants or plant products, you are responsible for taking the following actions:

1. Use the Phytosanitary Certificate Issuance and Tracking (PCIT) system to apply for inspection, sampling, testing, and certification of commodities offered for export. Phytosanitary certificates can be issued at the point of origin, at a port where the shipment will transit, or at the port of export.

2. Contact an Authorized Certification Official (ACO) as soon as possible. The ACO will need time to determine the phytosanitary import requirements and sample, inspect, test, and certify the commodities ahead of shipping or loading dates and within any time limits specified by the importing country. For help locating an ACO, please contact the Export Certification Specialist responsible for your State or county.

Exporters must be aware of and plan for any time limits a foreign country may specify for the period between the inspection date or certificate issuance date and the shipping date. If the country does not specify a time limit, inspections should not be done more than 30 days before export.

3. Provide all necessary documentation, including import permits, bills of lading, manifests, shipping invoices, foreign phytosanitary certificates, and inspection certificates. You must also provide official communication stating the import requirements for your commodities if they differ from those documented in the Phytosanitary Export Database (PExD). Examples of official communication include an import permit, special authorization, or recent correspondence from the National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO) of the foreign country.

Exporters frequently present letters of credit from their foreign country contacts to indicate that plant quarantine regulations have changed. Letters of credit are fiduciary documents and cannot be considered an official communication of plant quarantine regulation changes or exceptions.

Exporters are responsible for ensuring official communications are translated into English. APHIS does not provide translation services. Bilingual documents are acceptable as long as one of the languages is English.

4. Make the commodity available for inspection, sampling, testing, and certification. It must be accessible to the ACO to verify, sample, and inspect. Shipments cannot be inspected onboard aircraft or ships. Commodities that are loaded into maritime containers in bulk form cannot be inspected once the container has been loaded. The exporter is responsible for arranging to have the consignment sampled and/or inspected before it is loaded into containers or onto the plane or ship. Make sure shipping documents are marked or stamped to prevent the shipment from being loaded before the inspection is conducted.

5. Provide labor to open and close packages for inspection and adequate facilities to perform the inspection. Such facilities include supplies, equipment, and proper lighting required for efficient inspection.

6. Provide materials and labor for any required treatments, reconditioning, or other actions to meet the import requirements of the foreign country.

7. Export only those plants or plant products that have been inspected and certified under a Federal phytosanitary certificate.

8. Safeguard the certified shipment from infestation between the date the shipment was sampled and the actual shipping date. Ensure that the certified shipment departs within the time limits specified by the importing country.

9. Comply with U.S. export control regulations. The Federal government controls the exportation of U.S. goods to all foreign countries. The Department of Commerce is the authority for licensing most items for export. Other Federal agencies such as the Agricultural Marketing Service and the Federal Grain Inspection Service handle certification for specific products.

More Information

To download a printable copy of this list or to view additional exporter responsibilities, including the protocol for requesting a certification eligibility review and options for certifying Canadian produced seed, see Exporter or Shipper Responsibilities Related to the Export Certification of Plants or Plant Products (57.77 KB).

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