Agricultural Quarantine and Inspection Program

Last Modified:

The Agricultural Quarantine and Inspection (AQI) program uses a system of safeguards to facilitate the safe trade of agricultural commodities and protect U.S. agriculture and natural resources from invasive plant pests and animal diseases. APHIS partners with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to carry out AQI activities at all U.S. ports of entry.

Why AQI?

Exotic fruit flies, wood-boring insects, foreign animal diseases, and other invasive pests can spread via global trade and travel. Infestations have staggering costs: billions of dollars lost in production and export markets, millions more for pest and disease management expenses, increased prices for food and other agricultural goods, and often serious damage to our native ecosystem.

At U.S. ports of entry, APHIS and CBP work together to identify and inspect for plant pests and animal diseases associated with the entry of conveyances and their associated cargo and international travelers and their bags. Our actions keep U.S. agriculture and natural resources healthy while keeping international trade and travel moving. Here are some examples of the AQI program's value and impact:

- By stopping invasive pest threats at our borders, the AQI program protects America's roughly **$1.53 trillion** agricultural economy.
- The AQI program makes the import of agricultural commodities possible. In calendar year 2023, agricultural imports represented **$194.9 billion** in economic activity.
- It also protects the sanitary and phytosanitary integrity of U.S. agricultural products and natural resource production, supporting U.S. agricultural exports valued at **$174.9 billion** in calendar year 2023.
- The AQI program helps support and protect millions of jobs in agriculture and related industries, which represent approximately 10.4 percent of total U.S. employment.
- It helps protect U.S. agricultural production valued at **$543 billion.**
- The AQI program helps protect our Nation's natural resources from plant pests and diseases, including:
    - **823 million acres** of forests and woodlands that produce over **$200 billion** in forest products every year.
    - National forests and grasslands that contribute approximately **$14.5 billion** annually to the U.S. economy and help to sustain an estimated **223,000** jobs in rural areas.
    - Urban forests and trees that can reduce energy used for heating and cooling by **$5.4 billion** every year while producing **67 million tons** of oxygen.
    - **770 million acres** of U.S. rangelands valued upwards at **$21.2 billion** for livestock forage, carbon sequestration, recreation, and general ecosystem services (such as enhancing plant and animal biodiversity and protecting grassland against development pressure).

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What We Do

APHIS and CBP share responsibility for managing the AQI program.

Memorandum of Agreement

2022–2026 Joint Agency Strategic Plan

CBP is responsible for port-of-entry inspection, including the pre-arrival analysis, inspection, and clearance of:

- Commercial conveyances and their cargo arriving at U.S. ports of entry, including ships, trains, planes, and trucks
- International passengers and their baggage arriving by air, cruise, rail, and bus
- Preclearance of international passengers at ports of departure outside the customs territory of the United States
- Private vehicles and their passengers at the borders
- Pedestrians and their baggage crossing at land borders
- Private aircraft arriving from international origins
- Military aircraft and military vessels arriving from overseas
- International mail and express courier shipments

APHIS is responsible for:

- Negotiating agricultural export and import agreements with trading partners
- Developing import regulations, policies, and procedures
- Permitting: Issuing permits for the import, transit, and release of regulated items
- Preclearance and Offshore Risk Reduction: Inspecting, treating, and preclearing agricultural commodities in their country of origin
- Propagative Plant Inspection and Plant Germplasm Quarantine: Inspecting live plants and propagative plant material arriving from overseas, including risk-based sampling
- Animal Disease Exclusion Programs: Support for animal product inspection and regulated garbage activities
- Pest Identification: Identifying pests and diseases found on arriving cargo and conveyances
- Quarantine Treatments: Developing, conducting, and monitoring treatments to control pests and diseases
- Risk Analysis and Methods Development: Analyzing and assessing pest risks to inform import requirements and port-of-entry inspection activities and uncovering new pathways that may bring pests to our shores
- Passenger Predeparture Programs: Facilitating the movement of travelers, baggage, mail, and cargo arriving into the U.S. mainland from Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands

- Training APHIS employees, CBP employees, canines, and their handlers to detect and keep plant and animal pests and diseases out of the country
- Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance: Monitoring U.S. commerce to find and stop the distribution of smuggled agricultural products
- AQI User Fees: Administering the user fee program that funds the majority of AQI program operations
- Greater Caribbean Safeguarding Initiative (GCSI): Working with countries in the Greater Caribbean Region to prevent, detect, and control existing and emerging plant pest threats

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AQI User Fees

APHIS charges user fees for AQI services.

Learn more about AQI user fees
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