

Information for Travelers Returning from Overseas Travel

Depending on the region or country from which you are traveling, you may be able to bring back certain agricultural products, including fruits, vegetables, meats, processed foods, plants, and handicraft items. Some agricultural items, however, are restricted—or even prohibited entry into the United States—in order to protect community health, preserve the environment, and prevent the introduction of devastating pests and diseases to domestic plants and animals. If they were to become established in the United States, invasive pests and diseases could devastate urban and rural landscapes and cost billions of dollars in lost revenue and eradication efforts.

Together, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) enforce these restrictions. USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) establishes regulations concerning the admissibility of plant and animal products returning with travelers. DHS' Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers and agriculture specialists are stationed at ports of entry and along land and sea borders. They enforce the laws and requirements of several Federal agencies, including APHIS.

Travelers must declare all agricultural items to CBP officers or CBP agriculture specialists at the first port of entry. Failure to declare food products can result in up to \$10,000 in fines and penalties.

Generally Allowed Food Items

The following food items are generally allowed entry:

- Condiments such as oil, vinegar, mustard, catsup, pickles, syrup, honey without honey combs, jelly, and jam
- Foodstuffs such as bakery items, candy, and chocolate
- Hard cured cheeses without meat, such as parmesan or cheddar
- Canned goods and goods in vacuum packed jars (other than those containing meat or poultry products) for personal use
- Fish or fish products for personal use

- Powdered drinks sealed in original containers with ingredients listed in English. However, admissibility is still under the discretion of CBP agricultural specialist.
- Dry mixes containing dairy and egg ingredients (such as baking mixes, cocoa mixes, drink mixes, instant cake mixes, instant pudding mixes, liquid drink mixes containing reconstituted dry milk or dry milk products, potato flakes, and infant formula) that are commercially labeled, presented in final finished packaging, and require no further manipulation of the product are generally allowed.

Even if the item appears on the above list, all food and agricultural products must be declared to a CBP agriculture specialist or CBP officer and must be presented for inspection.

Fruits and Vegetables

Travelers can check the general admissibility of fruits and vegetables by consulting APHIS' Fruits and Vegetables Import Requirements (FAVIR) database at www.aphis.usda.gov/favir/. Simply select the type of fruit or vegetable in the "Approved Name" field and select the country of origin in the "Country/Region" field. You will receive one of the following results:

- "0 entries found" means the fruit or vegetable is NOT allowed into the United States
- "# entry(ies) found [followed by the name of the commodity and the name of the country]" If this text appears, click on "CIR" to view the commodity import report.
 - If the import requirements indicate "1 Subject to Inspection: This commodity is subject to inspection at the port of entry and all general requirements of 7 CFR 319.56-3," then the fruit or vegetable is allowed into the United States pending inspection.
 - If the import requirements indicate "Condition of entry treatment," then the fruit or vegetable is NOT allowed into the United States in passenger baggage.

Animal Products and Byproducts

Meat, milk, egg, poultry, and their products, including products made with these materials, such as dried soup mix or bouillon, are either prohibited or restricted from entering the United States, depending on the types of animal diseases that occur in the country of origin. Fresh (chilled or frozen), dried, cured, and fully cooked meat is generally prohibited from

most countries. Canned meat is allowed entry, except beef, veal, lamb, mutton, venison, elk, bison, etc., from countries affected by bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Products containing raw egg ingredients are prohibited from most regions.

Pork and pork products are not allowed from Mexico, except for cooked pork in small amounts for a meal.

Effective January 14, 2010, cooked pork skins (also known as pork rind) entering as commercial cargo or in passenger baggage from regions affected with foot-and-mouth disease, swine vesicular disease, African swine fever, or classical swine fever must be accompanied by an original veterinary certificate issued by an official of the national government of the region of origin.

Propagative Plant Material (Plants/Plant Parts for Planting)

Many plants may enter the United States from foreign countries, provided they meet certain entry requirements. Entry requirements vary by plant, but the following requirements universally apply:

- If you bring back 12 or fewer admissible plants that have no special restrictions, you do not need a permit. Special restrictions may include requirements such as a permit, post-entry quarantine, treatment, or Endangered Species Act or Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora documentation.
- Plants must be accompanied by a phytosanitary certificate from the country of origin showing that the plants meet entry requirements for the United States.
- Plants should be bare rooted (no growing media attached to the roots).
- You should perform a basic visual inspection of plants. Look for insects or sickly looking plant parts.
- Wrap plants in damp newspaper or similar material to prevent them from drying out. Roots may be secured in a plastic bag.

Twelve or fewer plants are inspected by CBP at the first port of entry. Thirteen or more plants will be inspected by APHIS personnel at the nearest plant inspection station. If the inspector finds plant pests that could cause harm to other plants, or if the plants do not meet entry requirements, they will be refused entry. This means you must forfeit the plants, which will either be destroyed or returned to the country of origin.

Travelers are advised to consult with their nearest inspection station to determine the admissibility of propagative plant material (including live plants, bulbs, corms, cuttings, root crowns, seeds, etc.). For a list of inspection stations, visit www.aphis.usda.gov/import_export/plants/plant_imports/plant_inspection_stations_contd.shtml.

Canadian Agricultural Products

For fruits and vegetables from Canada, consult the FAVIR database at www.aphis.usda.gov/favir/.

Fruits and vegetables grown in Canada are generally allowed, if they have labels identifying them as products of Canada. Fruits and vegetables merely purchased in Canada are not necessarily allowed. For example, citrus or tropical fruits such as mangos, which can be purchased but not grown in Canada, are not admissible.

Currently, potatoes from western regions of Canada are restricted because of a disease outbreak. While commercial imports are permitted under stringent guidelines, travelers from Canada should avoid bringing raw potatoes with them into the United States.

Food products from Canada, including pet food and fresh (frozen or chilled), cooked, canned or otherwise processed products containing beef, veal, bison, and cervid (e.g., deer, elk, moose, caribou, etc.) are now permitted from Canada in passenger baggage. Products containing sheep, lamb, or goat will not be allowed entry.

Travelers must provide proof of the origin of beef, pork, poultry, cervid meat, and pet food in order to bring them into the United States. Examples of proof of origin include the grocery store receipt where the product was purchased or the label on the product indicating the province in which it was packaged.

Additional Information

Other than the above general guidelines, it is impossible to advise travelers about the admissibility of specific agricultural items because agricultural health risks and considerations are so susceptible to change. Disease and pest outbreaks that impact the admissibility status of agricultural items occur all over the world at any time. The simplest way to determine the admissibility of food and agricultural items is to declare all food and agricultural items to a CBP officer or CBP agriculture specialist at the first port of entry into the United States.

If you have questions about importing a specific agricultural item into the United States, use the

information below to contact an APHIS technical specialist:

- For plants and plant products, including fruits and vegetables, call (301) 851-2046 or toll free at (877) 770-5990, or email permits@aphis.usda.gov.
- For soil, live plant pests, biological control agents, or noxious weeds, call (866) 524-5421, or email pest.permits@aphis.usda.gov.
- For animal products or byproducts, call (301) 851-3300, or email AskNCIE.Products@aphis.usda.gov.

In addition, APHIS' Web site contains a wealth of useful information for travelers at www.aphis.usda.gov/travel.

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