



PPQ 2023 Annual Report

Making Agricultural Trade Safe and Supporting U.S. Exports

Table of Contents

- Introduction 1**
- Creating a Safe, Smoothly Functioning Trade System 2**
 - Promoting Safe Trade Through Effective International Collaboration..... 2
 - Advancing the Global Use of Modern Technologies 4
 - Helping the World Address High-Risk Pest Pathways 5
- Securing Economic Opportunities Abroad for U.S. Products 7**
 - Sustaining and Expanding Key Export Markets 7
 - Certifying the Health of U.S. Exports 8

Introduction

While global trade brings tremendous benefits, it also brings risks. Potentially harmful plant and animal pests and diseases can hitchhike on, or in, the plants, fruits, vegetables, and other products we trade. To help the world move billions of dollars in commodities without spreading invasive pests and diseases, PPQ works with countries around the globe to promote a safe, fair, and predictable trade system. This system, built on internationally and regionally harmonized, science-based plant health measures, not only reduces pest risks but also helps to create a level playing field for U.S. products abroad.

Creating a Safe, Smoothly Functioning Trade System

PPQ sits at the negotiating tables of two renowned plant health standard-setting organizations: The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and the North American Plant Protection Organization (NAPPO). Through these forums, PPQ maintains and builds essential international and regional relationships that help the United States advance plant health protection standards and harmonized regulatory approaches for safely expanding global agricultural trade.

Promoting Safe Trade Through Effective International Collaboration

Strategic international relationships are critical to achieving a safe, fair, and predictable trade system. These relationships create a stronger basis for addressing trade-related pest and disease threats, resolving plant-health trade problems, establishing science-based trade standards, and advancing mutually beneficial trade goals. PPQ has successfully worked with the IPPC's other 184 contracting parties to continue progressing the organization's current work program to protect the world's plant resources against invasive pests and promote safe trade.

We collaborated closely with our partners to ensure IPPC action and forward momentum on various subjects, including draft standards. PPQ also actively advanced and influenced the IPPC work program through its ongoing membership in the IPPC Bureau and leadership on important strategic committees.

The IPPC contracting parties adopted three international standards, one phytosanitary treatment, and one diagnostic protocol to harmonize international trade. Discussions helped to advance work on climate change and the One Health concept (an approach that recognizes the health of animals, people, plants, and the environment are linked, and all those involved in protecting animal, human, and environmental

health must work together to achieve the best health outcomes), and to continue momentum on U.S. priorities such as sea container cleanliness, electronic phytosanitary certification (ePhyto), and sustainable funding strategies for the IPPC. PPQ also positioned key U.S. experts on various technical committees, particularly those related to standards setting.

At the regional level, PPQ worked effectively with Canada and Mexico through NAPPO to advance key regional standard-setting and implementation initiatives. We aim to strengthen the North American perimeter against foreign pests and facilitate safe agricultural trade. PPQ, in collaboration with our partners, successfully advanced NAPPO's 2023 work program, which focused on seeds and diagnostics, in-transit consignments, forestry, biological control, electronic phytosanitary certificates, and the regional pest alert system. PPQ also actively influenced the NAPPO work program through its robust participation in strategic NAPPO governance committees and expert groups, using new approaches for effectively conducting business virtually. In addition, PPQ successfully positioned U.S. experts in key NAPPO expert groups. During 2023, more than 50 Agency and U.S. Government, State, academic, and industry experts served in over 15 active NAPPO initiatives, ensuring strong U.S. stakeholder involvement in standard setting activities.

Through NAPPO, PPQ strengthened strategic and technical dialogue, and collaboration with key international counterparts and regional plant protection organizations—particularly the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization and the Inter-American Coordinating Group for Plant Protection.

Outside the IPPC and NAPPO, PPQ continued building influential relationships with important foreign colleagues to advance shared goals. For 30 years, PPQ has met regularly with the chief plant protection

officers of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. This strategic coalition, the Plant Health Alliance (or PHA, formerly known as the Quads), promotes safe trade concepts and influences the global plant health policy agenda. This year, the PHA members agreed to coordinate strategies for advancing key issues. Examples include:

- Influencing the global approach for managing pest risks associated with e-commerce and sea containers.
- Climate change and plant health, and the IPPC's potential future role in this area.
- Implementing the new IPPC strategic framework.
- Introducing new concepts for monitoring emerging pest threats at the global level.

[Advancing the Global Use of Modern Technologies](#)

Internationally, PPQ has been instrumental in building the world's first global electronic phytosanitary (ePhyto) system, which began operating in 2018 and is embraced by more trading partners each year. Phytosanitary certificates are important documents attesting that a country's plant or plant product exports meet the importing country's plant health requirements. The ePhyto system makes their exchange fast, efficient, and fraud-resistant.

This year, the adoption of ePhyto accelerated as more countries realized how the safe, fraud-resistant exchange of electronic certificates facilitate the clearance of shipments at ports of entry, especially during the pandemic. In fiscal year (FY) 2023, PPQ can now send electronic export certificates to 95 countries, adding 12 trading partners. The United States sent 310,000 ePhytos to 84 trading partners, received 330,000 ePhytos from 68 trading partners, and assisted 14 trading partners on ePhyto by providing training and technical assistance.

Helping the World Address High-Risk Pest Pathways

PPQ continues to help the global community tackle the high-risk pest pathway of sea containers.

Sea containers, which travel the world, are a shared risk, which means they are a shared responsibility for us all.

We continue to focus on industry engagement and more outreach and education. In February, we held a North American Sea Container Initiative workshop in Washington, DC. Its goal was to identify ways that key parties could further reduce the risk of pest contamination of containers and their cargoes throughout the supply chain.

In July, PPQ participated in the IPPC sea container workshop in Brisbane, Australia. It increased awareness on the risks and impacts of movement of plants, plant products, and other goods via sea containers and their cargoes—and the international trade disruption that could result from contamination and pest spread. The workshop drew NPPO and RPPO representatives, international industry organizations, and many industry stakeholders such as container owners, freight forwarders, packers, marine terminal operators, shippers, importers, and exporters.

The participants reviewed the draft IPPC sea container recommendations, which lays out different options for industry and NPPOs. The options include container design, technology, outreach, and education. The IPPC posted the draft recommendations and opened a consultation period, which closed on Sept. 29. The IPPC sea container focus group will address the comments, which will go to IPPC's Commission on Phytosanitary Measures for adoption as an IPPC recommendation.

Seed health remains a topic of great interest internationally and regionally. PPQ developed ReFreSH in collaboration with the seed industry, State and Federal officials, academia, and others. The ReFreSH project will result in a more effective and efficient program for managing plant health (phytosanitary) risk associated with international seed movements.

In 2023 we invited stakeholder input on two foundational ReFreSH documents: the ReFreSH Accreditation Standard and the ReFreSH Participant Manual. The comment period lasted 30 days, and then we extended it for 30 more days. It closed in April. We received 188 comments from 10 entities. Most of them were positive, but many included a great deal of information for our consideration. We addressed these comments and posted the final versions of both documents, as well as a ReFreSH seed health management plan spreadsheet, on the ReFreSH website in October 2023. We designed the fillable ReFreSH seed health management plan spreadsheet to simplify and expedite data collection and document review for participating NPPOs.

We are also continuing to plan ReFreSH pilots with Chile. Two companies have proposed ReFreSH pilots to exchange small lots of corn seed between the United States and Chile. The two participating companies submitted draft ReFreSH Manual documents in support of these pilots. PPQ and Chile's national plant protection organization reviewed these documents and provided feedback to the companies detailing the additional information needed to approve the ReFreSH Manuals.

As we await revised ReFreSH Manual documents from the companies, we will engage with Chile and colleagues in IPMSP and Field Operations to determine pilot details, roles, and responsibilities with a goal to launch the pilots in 2024.

Securing Economic Opportunities Abroad for U.S. Products

U.S. agricultural exports bring significant value to our economy. In FY 2023, international sales of U.S. agricultural products totaled \$178.7 billion, with plants and plant product sales alone reaching \$121.4 billion. This value helps to energize our economy and support more than one million American jobs. PPQ's work to negotiate science-based phytosanitary requirements with foreign trading partners and remove plant health-related trade barriers is essential to helping America's farmers reach new customers and ensuring that U.S. products are treated fairly in the global marketplace.

Sustaining and Expanding Key Export Markets

Each year, PPQ conducts technical negotiations with countries worldwide to open, expand, or maintain export markets for U.S. commodities. In addition, we provide technical expertise to the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) and USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) as they pursue other diplomatic channels, such as the World Trade Organization, to help resolve trade barriers for U.S. exporters.

In our technical negotiations, we use science, data, and international guidelines to remove plant health-related barriers to American products. In FY 2023, PPQ completed approximately 200 risk analyses associated with imports, exports, invasive pest threats, and other programmatic requirements. This total includes 28 analyses to open, expand, or maintain export markets for U.S. producers and 26 risk assessments for import requests from foreign countries.

In FY **2023**, we completed **22** bilateral and **63** technical meetings to establish practical, science-based phytosanitary requirements for the safe trade of live plants and fresh fruits and vegetables. Through

these meetings, we helped the United States realize significant trade opportunities, opening, maintaining, and expanding export markets—an added value of approximately \$459.3 million, which also includes facilitating the release of held shipments.

Certifying the Health of U.S. Exports

U.S. exporters rely on PPQ and its State and county partners to inspect and certify plants and plant products shipped to markets overseas. These export certificates attest that the United States is presenting products that meet the importing countries' requirements. Thanks to PPQ's electronic certification system, the process of issuing phytosanitary certificates is now fast, efficient, and fraud-resistant. PPQ also maintains a database of foreign country import requirements for plant and plant products. With these tools, authorized Federal, State, and County agriculture officials issued more than 591,000 certificates to facilitate the export of U.S. plants and plant products to over 200 international destinations in FY 2023.