

Shipping Plants, Food, and Other Agricultural Products via Express Courier

Today, it is common to purchase, send, and receive items from around the world. However, shipments sent from foreign countries into the United States—for example a handicraft item made of wood from a friend who’s vacationing abroad, food sent from family members living overseas, or seeds purchased online for your garden—could pose a risk to U.S. agriculture or the environment. That’s because they could harbor an invasive pest or disease. In addition, mailing or shipping plants or other agricultural items from areas within the United States under Federal or State quarantine for an invasive pest or disease could spread these threats to new areas.

You Are the “Importer of Record”

As a package’s intended recipient, you are considered the official importer of record and are legally responsible for it. The package may be seized and destroyed at the port of entry by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) inspectors; you may also face steep fines under applicable USDA regulations. To avoid such outcomes, here are some guidelines for sending products from outside the U.S. mainland and within the United States via express courier.

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Shipping Agricultural Items From Another Country

Plants and Plant Products (plants, seeds, fruits, vegetables, dried and processed items, etc.)

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 (e.g., rice, herbs, citrus peel, handicrafts)

Importing Plants and Plant Parts

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.

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 pests and 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 and an import permit issued by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. To view import requirements for a specific commodity from a specific country, visit the Agricultural Commodity Import Requirements web page.

More Information: • Importing Plants and Plant Products • Agricultural Commodity Import Requirements • Apply for a Permit	Questions: Phone: 301-851-2046 Toll-Free Automated System: 877-770-5990 Fax: 301-734-5786 Email: plantproducts.permits@usda.gov
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Buying and Selling Plants and Seeds Online

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 pests and 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 and an import permit issued by USDA's Animal and Plant Health

Inspection Service. To view import requirements for a specific commodity from a specific country, visit the Agricultural Commodity Import Requirements web page.

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Plant Pests and Soil

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 (plant-feeding insects, mites, snails, slugs, isopods, and plant pathogenic bacteria, viruses, fungi, etc.), biological control organisms of plant pests and weeds, bees, parasitic plants, and federally listed noxious weeds.

More information: • Importing plant pests • Apply for a permit	Questions: Phone: 301-851-2285 Toll Free: 866-524-5421 Email: Pest.Permits@usda.gov
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Buying Invertebrate Pets

Please contact USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) before buying a land-dwelling invertebrate, such as snails, insects, isopods, scorpions, and spiders. 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 on our [Invertebrate Pets web page](#).

Soil

Soil is strictly regulated by APHIS' Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program 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 normally prohibited but may be authorized under a permit (PPQ Form 525-A) under strict conditions, safeguards, and controlled circumstances. In addition, soil movement within the United States is restricted unless authorized by APHIS under specific conditions, safeguards, and controlled circumstances described in a permit and/or compliance agreement.

More information: • Soil • Apply for a permit	Questions: Phone 301-851-2285 Toll Free 866-524-5421 Email: Pest.Permits@usda.gov
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Animals, Animal Products, and Animal Byproducts from Another Country (meat; milk; eggs; pet food; hides; bones; feathers; hunting trophies; animal byproducts, including pharmaceuticals, research samples, and materials for industrial use; germplasm, etc.)

Restricted or Prohibited Items

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

- Meats, eggs, milk, and other animal products for human consumption
- Pet food, chews and treats, and animal feed, as well as hides, bones, feathers, and hunting trophies from certain animals
- Animal byproducts, including pharmaceuticals, research samples, and materials for industrial use
- Live animals (including pet birds)
- Hatching eggs
- Certain species of freshwater fish (including koi and goldfish)
- Germplasm
- Any livestock or poultry pathogen or material that could contain or spread a pathogen

Importing Animals and Animal Products

Live animals and their products and byproducts can transmit many diseases harmful 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, regulated live animal species, and animal products and byproducts from foreign countries, often need USDA permits and/or proper Government certification to meet U.S. import requirements. For more information about import requirements, visit the links below. Note that other U.S. Government agencies—such as the Food and Drug Administration, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, etc.—may also have import requirements for an animal-derived product or byproduct.

More information: • Importing Animal and Animal Products	Additional Questions: Phone: (301) 851-3300 Fax: (301) 851-2239
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• Apply for a Permit	Live animal imports email: LAIE@usda.gov Animal Products/Byproducts Imports Email: APIE@usda.gov Contact Us
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Buying and Selling Animal Products

Imported animal products for human consumption, such as meat and poultry products, must originate from a USDA-approved facility. Certain meat, poultry, and egg products must also meet the import requirements of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) in addition to APHIS' requirements. To review FSIS' import requirements a see a list of approved establishments by country, please visit www.fsis.usda.gov/inspection/import-export/import-guidance.

Export Certificates are issued by the appropriate government entity of the country of origin. This document certifies that the 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 an animal disease of concern, or has been produced or processed in a manner to mitigate any introduction of animal disease into the United States.

More information: • Import Animal Products	Questions: Phone: (301) 851-3300 Animal Products/Animal Byproducts Email: APIE@usda.gov
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Sending Food and Agricultural Products From Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Hawaii to the U.S. Mainland

Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands

USDA prohibits or restricts the interstate movement of many agricultural products from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands into the U.S. mainland, including most fresh fruits and vegetables, certain types of plants and flowers, and certain pork and pork products. That's because these items could harbor a dangerous stowaway—an invasive pest or disease. Just one piece of fruit or a single plant—or a pork product—that is carrying an invasive pest or disease could cause millions of dollars in damage and lead to expensive eradication efforts, lost trade revenue, and higher food prices.

To learn whether you can ship an item from Puerto Rico or the U.S. Virgin Islands to the U.S. mainland, contact one of these offices:

USDA Offices in Puerto Rico: Aguada: (787) 986-7240 Aguadilla: (787) 931-7900 Carolina: (787) 710-7443 or (787) 710-7282	U.S. Customs and Border Protection offices in the U.S. Virgin Islands: St. Thomas: (340) 774-4554 St. Croix: (340) 778-1696
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Ponce: (787) 709-4957 San Juan: (787) 919-0585	
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Hawaii

USDA prohibits or restricts the movement of many agricultural products from Hawaii into the U.S. mainland, including most fresh fruits and vegetables and certain types of plants and flowers. That’s because these items could harbor a dangerous stowaway—an invasive pest or disease.

Just one piece of fruit or a single plant that is carrying an invasive pest or disease could cause millions of dollars in damage and lead to expensive eradication efforts, lost trade revenue, and higher food prices.

To learn whether you can ship an item from Hawaii to the U.S. mainland, contact one of these USDA offices in Hawaii:	For information on how to certify plants and cuttings, contact the Hawaii Department of Agriculture:
Honolulu: (808) 834-3220	Honolulu: (808) 832-0566
Kona: (808) 326-1252	Hilo: (808) 974-4141
Kauai: (808) 632-2511	Kauai: (808) 241-7135
Hilo: (808) 933-6930	Maui: (808) 872-3848
Maui: (808) 877-5261	Kona: (808) 326-1077

Shipping Agricultural Items Within the United States

Never mail or ship plants or other agricultural items from areas within the United States under Federal or State quarantine for an invasive pest or you may spread them to new areas. This is especially true for homegrown produce you may wish to share with family or friends. Call your [local USDA office](#) to learn whether any quarantines apply to your shipment. You can find contact information here: www.aphis.usda.gov/planthealth/sphd.