



Animal and Plant
Health Inspection
Service

Office of the
Administrator

1400 Independence
Avenue SW
Washington, DC
20250

June 16, 2016

Dear Trade Stakeholders:

The U.S. government is nearing completion of its streamlining effort to enable you, and all our many importers, to conduct business through a “single window” and electronically submit trade documentation to the Department of Homeland Security’s Customs and Border Protection (CBP). All Federal Agencies with trade responsibilities, including us here at the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), are steadily working toward the same goal—mandatory implementation of the International Trade Data System (ITDS) and its “single window,” or the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE).

Some APHIS importers are already successfully using ACE to submit Lacey Act declarations—documents that confirm certain wild plants and plant products were legally harvested prior to import. But Lacey Act declarations are just one type of import data required by APHIS. Based on statistics from CBP, we know that the majority of importers are not yet set up to file other APHIS-required data in ACE, even though you will be mandated to do so starting later this summer. Meeting this timeframe, will require significant work on both our parts. We want to make sure you, and all our stakeholders, are taking the necessary steps to be ready to electronically file APHIS-required entry data and avoid potential import delays.

We’re at a critical stage now, so in the next several weeks, we’ll be sharing recorded tutorials of the implementation guides that brokers, filers and carriers will need to follow to ensure they have the technological capability to file APHIS import data in ACE. Then, over the summer, we will also set up blocks of time to meet with individual companies or brokers who may have specific, technical questions about the process or system. We will share the recorded tutorials as well as information about the summer question sessions through our [Stakeholder Registry](#) and also post the information on our [ITDS Web page](#).

We know the transition to ACE means additional work for you and may seem complicated, but we also know that once that work is complete, electronic filing will save you time and money. Over the coming months, we are committed to working closely with you and your technical experts to prepare for mandatory implementation. Cindy Walters is our APHIS ITDS liaison, and she is also a key point of contact if you have questions about ACE. Please direct any questions to her through the ACE.ITDS@aphis.usda.gov mailbox.

Sincerely,

Mike Gregoire
Associate Administrator