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Phytosanitary Treatments for Imported Commodities

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Commodities imported into the United States may require a phytosanitary treatment before they can enter the country to make sure they are free of pests and diseases. APHIS determines the types of treatments to use.

Types of Treatment

Phytosanitary treatments can be chemical or nonchemical. Approved chemical treatments include fumigants, dips, and sprays. Nonchemical treatments are cold treatment, hot water immersion, vapor heat treatment, steam sterilization, and irradiation.

Only APHIS-certified facilities may conduct or monitor treatments. Treatment options available depend on port of entry, commodity, packaging, and country of origin.

Confirm Treatment Requirements

APHIS' Agricultural Commodity Import Requirements (ACIR) database contains treatment information, including chemical treatments, nonchemical treatments, treatment schedules, treatment facilities, and more.

For more information on ACIR or the import process, visit How To Import Plants and Plant Products into the United States.

Can’t find treatment requirements for your commodity in ACIR?

Please refer to the APHIS Treatment Manual.

If you cannot find your commodity in ACIR or in our Treatment Manual, contact APHIS at acirdatabase.comments@usda.gov.

FAQs About Treatments

Below are answers to some common questions about treatment requirements.

Expand All

The treatment I want to use is not listed as an approved treatment for my commodity. What do I do?

If the commodity is eligible for entry and doesn't require any treatment for importation, you may apply for an import permit.

If the commodity is eligible for importation and requires a treatment you don't want to use, you'll need to contact the national plant protection organization (NPPO) of the exporting country where the commodity is produced. The NPPO must make a formal request to APHIS for you to use an alternative treatment.

What are the general steps involved in importing commodities that require treatment?

Step 1: Determine When and How To Conduct Treatment

Several agreements are required depending on whether the commodity will be treated in the country of origin or in the United States.

Option 1: Conduct treatment in the country of origin as part of an APHIS preclearance program.

If treatment is not taking place in the United States, the NPPO of the country where the treatment facility is located needs to make an official request to APHIS. Before a treatment can take place, APHIS and the exporting country's NPPO need the following bilaterally signed agreements in place so the commodities can enter the United States after treatment:

- Framework equivalency work plan for trade in treated commodities
- Operational work plan with commodity-specific addenda that describe the in-country requirements for production, packing, phytosanitary inspection and certification, and safeguarding before export

You can find a list of NPPO contact points on the International Plant Protection Organization website.

Option 2: Conduct treatment in the United States at an APHIS-approved treatment facility (listed in ACIR).

Step 2: Request an Importer Compliance Agreement

You also need an importer compliance agreement to import commodities into the United States. The agreement outlines your responsibilities, requirements, and liability to import or move untreated articles in the United States to an APHIS-approved treatment facility.

For instance, to prevent the escape of pests, imported articles moving in the United States for irradiation must arrive in approved insect-proof packaging.

You can review this sample compliance agreement (35.53 KB) for more information.

To request an importer compliance agreement, contact APHIS' Field Operations Treatments Team.

Please include the signed importer compliance agreement with your APHIS import permit application.

Step 3: Apply for an APHIS Import Permit

To import commodities, you also need a valid import permit. The permit should include the conditions for safeguarding the commodities traveling overland from the port of arrival to the APHIS-approved treatment facility.

Visit Importing Plants and Plant Products to learn about APHIS import permits.

Please include a copy of your signed importer compliance agreement with your permit application.

APHIS may take up to 30 days to review and process your permit application. Permits and compliance agreements are in effect **only** when approved and used together.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP) works with APHIS to make the final decision to authorize transit from the port of arrival to the APHIS-approved treatment facility.

Step 4: Begin Planning Logistics

Work with your supplier, exporter, or both in the commodity's country of origin to make sure they meet all of the requirements to import the commodity into the United States. You or your broker also need to contact the CBP local port office at the commodity's anticipated port of arrival to determine local port policies, along with safeguarding, transloading, and movement requirements for untreated consignments.

What are the non-phytosanitary import requirements that I should be aware of?

Federal agencies other than APHIS have regulatory oversight on the importation of food items into the United States. In advance of importation, contact the agencies below for more information:

- U.S. Food and Drug Administration
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection
- USDA Agricultural Marketing Service

Becoming an Approved Treatment Facility

For information on the approval process to certify U.S.-based facilities, contact your State plant health director.

If the facility is located in a country other than the United States, the National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO) of the foreign country where the treatment facility is located must make an official request to APHIS. View the list of NPPO contacts.

Have an importing question?

Visit Our Trade Contacts Directory
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