



PPQ 2025 Annual Report

Making Agricultural Trade Safe and Supporting U.S. Exports

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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. 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.

PPQ 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 two international plant health standards. Discussions helped to continue momentum on U.S. priorities including adopting the standards on the international movement of mango and uses of systems approaches to manage the pest risk associated with the international movement wood, and sustainable funding for electronic phytosanitary certification (ePhyto). PPQ also positioned key U.S. experts on various technical committees, including representing North America in the IPPC Bureau and 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. PPQ aims to strengthen the North American perimeter against foreign pests and facilitate safe agricultural trade. PPQ, in collaboration with partners, successfully advanced NAPPO's 2025 work program, which focused on seeds and diagnostics, *Tuta*

absoluta, alternatives to methyl bromide, 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 FY 2025, 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 (more recently) the United Kingdom. This strategic coalition, the Plant Health Quadrilaterals Plus (Quads+), promotes safe trade concepts and influences the global plant health policy agenda. In FY 2025 the Quads+ members agreed to coordinate strategies for advancing key issues. Examples include:

- Advancing acceptance of the use of electronic phytosanitary certificates to improve the efficiency and reliability of trade in plant health commodities.
- Promoting the use of systems approaches through development and delivery of a workshop to broaden treatment options for plant commodity exporters.
- Promoting the implementation of the IPPC e-Commerce guide by exchanging information regarding recent incursions and strategies for new e-Commerce platforms, including the successful closure of pathways through sharing non-compliant events.

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.

In FY 2025, the adoption of ePhyto accelerated as more countries realized how the safe, fraud-resistant exchange of electronic certificates facilitates the clearance of shipments at ports of entry, especially during the pandemic. In fiscal year 2025, more than 643,000 phytosanitary certificates were issued for United States exports. Of those phytosanitary certificates, more than 341,000 were sent as ePhytos to 102 trading partners. In addition, the United States received 478,000 ePhytos from 64 trading partners.

Helping the World Address a High-Risk Pest Pathway

Seed health remains a topic of great interest internationally and regionally. Previously, PPQ developed the Regulatory Framework for Seed Health (ReFreSH) in collaboration with the seed industry, State and Federal officials, academia, and others. The goal was to create an alternative phytosanitary approach to international seed movements based on a systems approach that would allow proactive pest risk management via utilization of industry best practices. In FY25, PPQ discontinued work on ReFreSH while at the pilot development phase. This decision followed extensive discussions with the U.S. seed industry, which revealed recent structural and operational changes within the industry significantly reduced its ability to participate in ReFreSH.

To address ongoing seed health concerns, PPQ has shifted its focus toward providing improved import options for companies producing and trading restricted seeds. PPQ's long-term experience on the National Seed Health Accreditation Pilot Program on cucurbit seed demonstrated the potential of using industry resources to help manage quarantine pests in seed trade. PPQ has established a cross-functional working group to evaluate the policy and operational feasibility of a new program that will build on this experience, which is named National Seed Testing Onshore Program (NSTOP). Under NSTOP, approved industry participants would conduct their own seed testing, with PPQ providing oversight

through regular audits to ensure compliance with program requirements. This approach leverages existing industry resources and infrastructure, minimizes economic impact, and strengthens phytosanitary safeguards. Implementing NSTOP will likely require rulemaking and close coordination with our partners at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection.

Securing Economic Opportunities Abroad for U.S. Products

U.S. agricultural exports bring significant value to the American economy. In FY 2025, international sales of U.S. agricultural products totaled \$175.9 billion, with plants and plant product sales alone reaching \$136.8 billion. This value helps to energize the 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, PPQ provides 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 technical negotiations, PPQ uses science, data, and international guidelines to remove plant health-related barriers to American products. In FY 2025 PPQ completed approximately 250 risk analyses associated with imports, exports, invasive pest threats, and other programmatic requirements. This total included 28 analyses to open, expand, or maintain export markets for U.S. producers and 41 risk assessments for import requests from foreign countries.

In FY 2025, PPQ completed 14 bilateral and 53 technical meetings to establish practical, science-based phytosanitary requirements for the safe trade of live plants and fresh fruits and vegetables. Through these meetings, PPQ helped the United States realize significant trade opportunities, opening, maintaining, and expanding export markets—an added value of approximately \$710 million, not

including the value related to 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. As noted earlier, more than 643,000 phytosanitary certificates were issued for United States exports in FY 2025. Of those phytosanitary certificates, more than 341,000 were sent as ePhytos to 102 trading partners.