

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; our 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 FY 2025, 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. The long-term experience on the National Seed Health Accreditation Pilot Program on cucurbit seed demonstrated the potential of using of industry resources to help manage quarantine pests in seed trade. PPQ is evaluating 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 partners at the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP).