PPQ 2025 Annual Report

Strengthening Pest Exclusion at the Border

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Agricultural Quarantine and Inspection

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program and the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP) safeguard U.S. agricultural and natural resources from the introduction of invasive pests and diseases through the Agricultural Quarantine and Inspection (AQI) program. PPQ, part of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), assesses the risks associated with international trade and specific imported agricultural products and develops import regulations to exclude foreign pests and diseases and protect U.S. agriculture.

In addition, PPQ conducts off-shore pest risk reduction activities, including foreign commodity pre-clearance programs; trains agricultural inspectors and detector dog teams to work at U.S. ports of entry; inspects and takes action as necessary on imported plant propagative materials; monitors the fumigation of arriving containers and cargo to mitigate pest risks; conducts trade compliance activities to detect violations of PPQ's import regulations and prevent smuggling; and provides the scientific support necessary to carry out these activities and those carried out by CBP. These activities include, among other things, the authoritative and timely identification of pests necessary to determine whether regulatory actions on imported products are required.

PPQ collects AQI user fees under the authority of The Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 [21 U.S.C. 136a], to recover costs for services provided by PPQ and CBP associated with preclearance inspections of passengers and the port-of-entry arrival of commercial vessels, trucks, loaded railroad cars, aircraft, and passengers entering the United States from a foreign destination. In fiscal year (FY) 2025, AQI user fee collections were $1,027,370,774.74, marking the first time AQI user fee collections exceeded one billion dollars in PPQ history. Under the 2024 rulemaking implementation schedule, new rates became effective on October 1st of each fiscal year through FY 2028.

PPQ also receives appropriated funding for pre-departure inspections of passengers and cargo traveling from Hawaii and Puerto Rico to the continental United States to prevent the introduction of non-native agricultural pests and diseases into the continental United States while facilitating the movement of travelers and agricultural goods. PPQ inspects all passenger baggage leaving these islands because of the risks associated with pests of fruits and vegetables grown in these areas.

When inspectors identify an item that poses a specific risk, they take immediate action to prevent the entry of materials that could harbor the pest or disease in question. This action prevents damage to the country's agricultural industry and negates the need for costly control and eradication programs. PPQ also partners with industry groups and State and Commonwealth counterparts to facilitate the safe movement of cargo. In Hawaii, the State department of agriculture conducts nursery inspections and certifies nursery stock on PPQ's behalf for shipment to the continental United States.

Cooperative Program Management

PPQ works with CBP to protect America's agricultural resources and food supply through inspecting international passenger baggage, cargo, and conveyances. PPQ and CBP share management of the program through the CBP-PPQ Joint Agency Task Force, various inter-agency working groups, and daily collaboration. Senior leadership of both agencies meet frequently to develop joint plans and coordinate efforts in priority areas, ensure clear and balanced decision-making, streamline effective outreach and communication, and improve organizational structure and leadership to support the shared work in the agriculture safeguarding mission.

In FY 2025, PPQ trained 120 new CBP agriculture specialists and conducted basic agricultural threat training for 1,944 first line CBP officers. In addition, PPQ provided training support to CBP Agriculture Specialists, who delivered military cooperator inspector training, certifying 620 U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) cooperators who perform agriculture quarantine inspections in mainland U.S. military installations and delivering USDA Military Cooperator Train-the-Trainer certification workshop training to 24 CBP Agriculture Specialist field trainers. These cooperators prevent the entry of agricultural pests and diseases associated with military equipment and/or personnel returning from overseas military installations to the United States. Additionally, PPQ trained 13 Agriculture Detector Dog Team Supervisors, 13 Agriculture Canine Certifiers, and 40 canine teams for CBP.

CBP-Facilitated Port-of-Entry Inspections

In FY 2025, 206,006,531 passengers and pedestrians entered the United States by air, bus, ship, train, or on foot. The program also conducted secondary agricultural inspections of 528,998 of the approximately 75,555,026 million passenger vehicles entering the United States from Canada and Mexico in FY 2025. In addition, agriculture inspectors cleared 29,380 ships and inspected more than 1.57 million cargo, mail, and express carrier shipments, intercepting 50,441 pests and issuing 79,823 Emergency Action Notifications.

Propagative Plant Inspection

Importations of nursery stock and other propagative plant materials can serve as significant pathways for invasive pests and diseases. To reduce the risks associated with such imports, PPQ requires that certain imported plant materials enter the United States through 16 plant inspection stations located at ports of entry throughout the country and territories at major international airports and seaports, and at major crossings along the U.S.-Mexico border. Specialists at these stations inspect shipments to ensure that imported plants and seeds do not contain pests and diseases of regulatory significance.

In addition, they enforce the regulations that apply to the import and export of plant species protected by the Endangered Species Act and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. In FY 2025, inspectors cleared 26,057 imported shipments containing 1.76 billion plant units (cuttings, rooted plants, tissue culture, etc.) and over 2,157,600 kilograms of seeds of woody plants. Through these inspections, PPQ employees detected 4,652 pests of which 1,805 were quarantine significant pests at the plant inspection stations. In addition, the stations conducted 2,947 treatments or other actions to remediate pests on more than 9.7 million plant units and 346,800 kilograms of seed.

Pest Identification

When pests are detected during AQI activities, the program must identify them to determine if they are considered quarantine significant under PPQ regulations (i.e., if they are exotic and could pose a significant threat to U.S. plant health, if the program can allow the cargo entry into the United States, and what, if any, mitigation measures would be required.) In FY 2025, PPQ processed and identified approximately 103,000 AQI pest interceptions, with approximately 44,000 being quarantine significant.

In FY 2025, PPQ continued its use of digital imaging technology for pest identification, and PPQ National Specialists performed 86 percent of their final identifications for cargo on hold based on digital images, an increase of 2 percent over FY 2024. PPQ will continue the use of digital imaging technology as means to improve the timeliness of pest identifications for urgent submissions (i.e., those for which cargo is on hold pending a pest identification).

PPQ and CBP use the Cargo Release Authority (CRA) program to reduce the number of pests that CBP must submit to PPQ for identification, speeding up the inspection process for shipments that contain no

suspect quarantine pests. Through the CRA program, PPQ provides training and job aids that allow CBP Agriculture Specialists to recognize frequently intercepted, easily identifiable, low-risk organisms, and to release the cargo if the organism is not a quarantine significant pest. PPQ grants CRA after the Agriculture Specialist has successfully identified a particular pest a certain number of times and submitted documentation to PPQ.

Risk Analysis and Methods Development

PPQ's Plant Pest Risk Analysis (PPRA) unit develops pest risk analyses and epidemiological approaches to support and improve pest exclusion programs and decision making. In FY 2025, PPRA completed approximately 250 risk analyses associated with imports, exports, invasive pest threats, and other programmatic requirements. This total includes 41 analyses to open, expand, or maintain export markets for U.S. producers and 28 risk assessments for import requests from foreign countries. PPRA's work also included evaluations of 40 newly detected pests, 21 evaluations of offshore pests to identify the greatest threats and help prioritize resources, 4 pathway analyses and spread models, and 14 New Pest Response Guidelines to proactively prepare for emergency responses. These products identify potentially harmful plant pests and diseases and help PPQ decide what mitigating actions to take to prevent their entry into or limit their spread or economic impact within the United States.

Pre-Departure Inspections

In FY 2025, PPQ inspected the baggage of more than 16 million passengers prior to departing Hawaii and Puerto Rico and intercepted approximately 249,335 prohibited items and 2,912 quarantine-significant pests. PPQ conducts commodity certification and inspection programs to facilitate interstate trade among Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the continental United States. In FY 2025, the program conducted 339,166 inspections of regulated agricultural commodities shipped as cargo or through express carriers from Hawaii and Puerto Rico, using canine teams to assist in these inspections. In addition, out of the 375,740 cargo inspections, the program oversaw 9,843 cargo treatments in Hawaii and Puerto Rico.

The Predeparture program continued to conduct inspections and risk mitigation to prevent the movement of prohibited pork products and byproducts from the African swine fever (ASF) protection zone in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Since the inception of the ASF Federal Order in 2021, the

Predeparture program has successfully seized over 110,000 kilograms of pork and pork products destined to the U.S. mainland, keeping the $28 billion industry safe from this devastating disease.

Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance (SITC)

PPQ's SITC identifies and closes smuggling pathways for prohibited agricultural products into U.S. commerce. SITC works closely with CBP to identify and target agricultural risks at the ports of entry before they enter U.S. commerce. In FY 2025, SITC conducted 20,571 surveys and made 6,258 seizures of prohibited agricultural items in non-port of entry locations. Of these seizures, 694 were made in express courier facilities and one in ecommerce. Those seizures totaled 236,401 pounds of prohibited and/or restricted plants, plant products, meat, and meat products valued at approximately $1.8 million. SITC initiated 2,075 product traces, including 93 for sales conducted via ecommerce. Additionally, SITC conducted 4 recalls for restricted material, including noncompliant wooden handicrafts and grain products. Total seizures as a result of recalls weighed 2,103 pounds and had an estimated value of $20,964.

Treatment Program

PPQ supports U.S. imports of plants and plant products by facilitating and monitoring phytosanitary treatments. In FY 2025, PPQ facilitated entry of regulated agricultural cargo through the monitoring of 13,951 fumigations (594 commodities from 78 countries), 52,521 cold treatments (23 commodities from 16 countries), 8,180 irradiation certifications (18 commodities at 11 facilities in 6 countries), and 148 heat treatments of Niger seed to reduce pest risks on cargo that would not otherwise have been allowed entry. The treatment program expanded to allow cold treatment at a new port of entry and additional commodities to be treated at an established irradiation facility within the United States.

Permitting

PPQ requires that importers apply for permits for the importation of certain high-risk regulated plants and plant products for consumption or propagation into the United States and transit through the United States. These products include regulated plants and plant products, pests, and pathogens for diagnostics and research, biological control agents, soil, and Federal noxious weeds. Permits notify importers of

commodity import requirements to ensure products and commodities making entry into the United States will not harm American agriculture.

During FY 2025, PPQ issued 26,673 import permits for regulated plant material, organisms, and soil, and issued 11,873 letters (Letters of Denial or Letters of No Jurisdiction) in response to permit application requests. In addition, the PPQ Customer Support Center responded to 21,553 customer support calls and emails to assist stakeholders with import-related questions. PPQ continues to improve the customer experience through the development and delivery of the new eFile permitting system. The eFile system supports automated permitting for more than 60 percent of all permit types and reduces the wait time for a permit to be issued to within minutes, as compared to 2 – 4 weeks using the previous ePermits system.