



PPQ 2024 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 we trade. 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 185 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.

We 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 three international standards, one phytosanitary treatment, and one recommendation on sea container cleanliness measures. Discussions helped to continue momentum on U.S. priorities such as revisions to the IPPC standard on requirements for the establishment of pest-free areas (a key trade-related standard), sea container cleanliness, and sustainable funding for electronic

phytosanitary certification (ePhyto). PPQ also positioned key U.S. experts on various technical committees, particularly 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. We aim to strengthen the North American perimeter against foreign pests and facilitate safe agricultural trade. PPQ, in collaboration with our partners, successfully advanced NAPPO's 2024 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 2024, 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. This year, 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.
- Strategizing on promoting the use of systems approaches for trade to broaden treatment options for plant commodity exporters.

[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.

This year, 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 2024, more than 663,000 phytosanitary certificates were issued for United States exports. Of those phytosanitary certificates, more than 352,000 were sent as ePhytos to 107 trading partners, in addition the United States received 548,000 ePhytos from 61 trading partners.

[Helping the World Address a High-Risk Pest Pathway](#)

Seed health remains a topic of great interest internationally and regionally. Plant Protection & Quarantine (PPQ) developed the Regulatory Framework for Seed Health (ReFreSH) in collaboration

with the seed industry, State and Federal officials, academia, and others. ReFreSH is designed to offer a more effective and efficient program for managing plant health (phytosanitary) risk associated with international seed movements.

In 2024, the U.S. national plant protection organization (PPQ) continued working closely with Chile's NPPO Servicio Agrícola y Ganadero (SAG) and two seed companies toward a pilot for trade in corn breeder seed lots between Chile and the United States under ReFreSH. Both companies experienced difficulties sharing quality management system documents and other records with the U.S. and Chile NPPOs due to internal legal concerns. To address these challenges, PPQ and SAG proposed, and the industry participants agreed to, a ReFreSH program development exercise for the 2024 – 2025 corn seed production seasons. For the program development exercise, we broke down the requirements to meet the ReFreSH Accreditation Standard into 1) documentation to be provided before planting, and 2) documentation to be provided during in-person site visits to each company's production facility.

The companies agreed to provide to the U.S. and Chile NPPOs drafts of their ReFreSH Seed Health Management Plans (SHMP) before planting. The ReFreSH SHMP outlines the systems approach each company uses to mitigate plant pests and noxious weeds of concern throughout the seed production and shipping process. PPQ and SAG jointly conducted in-person site visits to each company's production facilities near Santiago, Chile, in February 2025. At the site visits, these NPPOs reviewed documentation and processes in place to meet the ReFreSH Accreditation Standard. Based on these observations, PPQ and SAG will provide feedback to help each company prepare for a full ReFreSH pilot for trade in corn breeder seed lots during the 2025 – 2026 production seasons in Chile and the United States.

Securing Economic Opportunities Abroad for U.S. Products

U.S. agricultural exports bring significant value to our economy. In FY 2024, 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 our 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, we provide 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 our technical negotiations, we use science, data, and international guidelines to remove plant health-related barriers to American products. In FY 2024, APHIS completed approximately 287 risk analyses associated with imports, exports, invasive pest threats, and other programmatic requirements. This total includes 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 2024, we completed 19 bilateral and 46 technical meetings to establish practical, science-based phytosanitary requirements for the safe trade of live plants and fresh fruits and vegetables. Through

these meetings, we helped the United States realize significant trade opportunities, opening, maintaining, and expanding export markets—an added value of approximately \$459.3 million, which also includes 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 663,000 phytosanitary certificates were issued for United States exports in FY 2024. Of those phytosanitary certificates, more than 352,000 were sent as ePhytos to 107 trading partners, in addition the United States received 548,000 ePhytos from 61 trading partners.