



PPQ 2022 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. Despite the pandemic, PPQ successfully worked with the IPPC's other 183 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 11 international plant health standards, and discussions moved forward on:

- Implementing the new 10-year IPPC draft strategic framework.
- Continued work on sea containers
- Developing long-term funding mechanisms.

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 the North American Plant Protection Organization (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 2022 work program, which focused on seeds and diagnostics, in-transit consignments, forestry, plants for planting, 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 2022, more than 50 Agency and U.S. Government, State, academic, and industry experts served in over 16 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, and New Zealand. This strategic coalition, the Plant Health Quadrilaterals (or Quads), promotes safe trade concepts and influences the global plant health policy agenda. This year, the four Quad members agreed to coordinate strategies for advancing key issues. Examples include:

- Influencing the global approach for managing pest risks associated with e-commerce and sea containers.
- Climate change and plant health, and the IPPC's potential future role in this area.
- Implementing the new IPPC strategic framework.
- Introducing new concepts for monitoring emerging pest threats at the global level.

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 facilitate the clearance of shipments at ports of entry, especially during the pandemic. In fiscal year (FY) 2022, PPQ sent electronic export certificates to 83 countries, adding 24 trading partners. The United States sent 292,000 ePhytos to 74 trading partners, received 203,000 ePhytos from 60 trading partners, and assisted 19 trading partners on ePhyto by providing training and technical assistance.

Helping the World Address High-Risk Pest Pathways

PPQ helps the global community cope with high-risk pest pathways such as sea containers and international seed trade. PPQ continues to support the global community in tackling the high-risk pest

pathway of sea containers. Sea containers, which travel the world, are a shared risk, which means they are a shared responsibility for all countries. PPQ participated in the IPPC Sea Container Task Force, which completed its work in December 2021. The IPPC's Secretariat has posted the [report](#) before the upcoming meeting of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures.

NAPPO is participating in the North American Sea Container Initiative (NASCI) to reduce the plant-health risk posed by the sea container pathway. Its goal is to develop a joint, collaborative, and voluntary program for reducing the pest risks from this pathway. The initiative also focuses on outreach and education globally by reaching out to other NPPOs, as well as international industry groups. PPQ strongly believes that tackling the problem at the regional level will be a solid first step toward a global solution.

PPQ holds monthly virtual meetings with a Sea Container group that includes Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. The group is reviewing documents and projects the IPPC Sea Container Focus Group produced to provide the four countries' perspectives. We have been hosting multiple webinars with major international shipping and cargo organizations. In addition, we coordinated with industry and Australia and New Zealand to hold webinars for international regulatory groups. In September 2022, PPQ participated in the Sea Container International Workshop in London, England. This workshop brought together NPPOs and regions from around the world to exchange lessons and experiences learned since the establishment of the IPPC Sea Container Task Force in 2017. Through these events, we gather information from organizations across the container supply chain about how they can help clean up this critical pathway.

Regarding seed health, PPQ has been working to create a holistic systems approach to reduce pest risks associated with seed trade. By putting safeguards in place throughout the seed production system, we can keep seed clean and healthy from start to finish. This will prevent the spread of seedborne pathogens and facilitate seed trade by reducing potential phytosanitary obstacles. The IPPC created International Standard for Phytosanitary Management 38, “International movement of seeds,” to address this risk. USDA’s Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program developed the Regulatory Framework for Seed Health (ReFreSH) in collaboration with the seed industry, State and Federal officials, academia, and others to reduce that risk.

ReFreSH is based on the internationally recognized hazard analysis and critical control point system for reducing the risk of food safety hazards. ReFreSH leverages industry best practices for managing pest risk, making international seed movement safer. It will offer a more efficient and effective alternative to the consignment-by-consignment certification process we have now. We have worked with the American Seed Trade Association, other seed industry stakeholders, and trading partners to advance this important initiative. Considering their input, we prepared foundational documents outlining the standards and guidelines for participating in ReFreSH. Last year, PPQ launched a website and opened a comment period for two foundational documents for ReFreSH: the ReFreSH Accreditation Standard and the ReFreSH Participant Manual. The comment period closed in April 2022, and we received 188 comments from ten entities. The majority were positive, but some included a great deal of information for our consideration. We are currently addressing those comments. APHIS will publish new ReFreSH Accreditation Standard and Participant Manual versions in FY 2023.

PPQ has been collaborating with Chile for the last few years, and both of our countries are committed to implementing a pilot for ReFreSH. With Chile, we first focus on small lots of corn seed, specifically

high-value breeder seed lots. Two multinational companies operating in Chile and the United States provided documentation we are evaluating. To support this initiative, PPQ has formed a Cross Functional Working Group to focus on answering questions before and during the ReFreSH pilot. We are excited that this pilot will be a strong proof of concept for ReFreSH and ultimately meet our goal to start exchanging small lots of corn seed without inspecting every shipment.

Securing Economic Opportunities Abroad for U.S. Products

U.S. agricultural exports bring significant value to our economy. In FY 2022, international sales of U.S. agricultural products totaled a record \$196.4 billion, with plants and plant product sales alone reaching \$143 billion, an increase of 15.8 percent over FY 2021 (\$123.5 billion). This increase 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 2022, PPQ completed approximately 278 risk analyses associated with imports, exports, invasive pest threats, and other programmatic requirements. This total includes 33 analyses to open, expand, or maintain export markets for U.S. producers and 48 risk assessments for import requests from foreign countries.

In FY 2022, we completed 20 bilateral and 101 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 new export markets and expanding current markets for U.S. industry. The total estimated value was \$417.5 million. An important example of these meetings is expanding market access in Mexico for U.S. potato exports, which will greatly increase U.S. exports and profits. The U.S. potato industry estimates that access to the entire country for fresh U.S. potatoes will provide a market potential of \$250 million over five years.

[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. With these tools, authorized Federal, State, and County agriculture officials issued more than 656,000 certificates to facilitate the export of U.S. plants and plant products to over 209 international destinations in FY 2022.