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Certification Programs

Last Modified:

Compliance-Based Certification Program for High-Quality Specialty Grain

APHIS will approve qualified grain facilities to conduct phytosanitary inspection of high-quality specialty grain (HQSG) (i.e., grain exceeding the USDA number 1 grade). Participating grain facilities and exporters must be exempt from official inspection and weighing requirements of the Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS), AMS, USDA. APHIS will use inspection results from grain facilities under APHIS compliance for phytosanitary certification of containerized HQSG and associated samples. Any facility participating in the Compliance-Based Certification Program must have the HQSG exemption and be listed on the current Exemption and Waiver Listing on the [FGIS website](#).

To qualify, grain facilities must have implemented best manufacturing practices consistent with those recommended by the Specialty Soya and Grain Alliance (SSGA). Interested grain facilities must be recognized by SSGA for successful completion of a facility review and meeting all applicable APHIS requirements. To obtain further information and request application materials, contact the SSGA Executive Director at rduckworth@soyagrainsalliance.org.

Once the application and review process are completed, SSGA recommends applicants to APHIS. Qualified applicants will then sign an APHIS compliance agreement detailing duties, responsibilities, applicable regulations, and action in

case of noncompliance.

Industry may use inspection reports from approved grain facilities when they apply for high-quality specialty grain phytosanitary certification. It is the exporter's responsibility to obtain the USDA AMS Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) HQSG exemption and meet all FGIS requirements for export.

For More Information

For more information about this program or questions about the [List of USDA APHIS Approved HQSG Facilities Under Compliance](#), contact your local [APHIS PPQ Export Certification Specialist](#).

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U.S.-Canada Greenhouse-Grown Plant Certification Program

Export of greenhouse-grown plants to Canada is simplified by the revised U.S.-Canada Greenhouse Certification Program (GCP). A cooperative greenhouse certification program has been in place between the United States (as the USGCP) and Canada (as the CGCP) since 1996. The program facilitates the trade of greenhouse-grown plants between the United States and Canada by allowing authorized facilities to use an Export Certification Label (ECL, also called a "GCP Sticker") in lieu of a phytosanitary certificate. To improve the consistency and effectiveness of the program (previously called the USGCP), APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) have revised the program requirements. This revised program will replace the previous agreement (USGCP) over a 2-year transition. The GCP also joins the Canadian Greenhouse-Grown Certification Program (CGCP) and the USGCP into one program. The Technical Requirements document outlines the responsibilities of the participating facilities and of APHIS and CFIA under the revised GCP.

- [Technical Requirements](#) (654.77 KB), U.S.-Canada Greenhouse-Grown Plant Certification Program

Background information on the greenhouse program, an overview of the revised Technical Requirements, and a questions and answers document are provided below to assist participants in meeting the requirements.

- [Background: U.S.-Canadian Greenhouse-Grown Plant Certification Program](#)
- [Overview and Highlights of the Revised Technical Requirements](#)
- [Questions and Answers](#)

The comments and concerns identified by stakeholders during the 2014 consultation period were taken into account during the revisions.

To facilitate an orderly transition to the revised program, APHIS, CFIA, and their cooperators are providing training and assistance to participants. Authorized Facilities in the United States can continue to use their existing USGCP export certification labels to ship to Canada through the transition period. At the end of the transition period, USDA and APHIS will collect the export certification labels and interfacility stamps of any facilities that have not completed the transition to the GCP.

- [USDA Approved Facilities Authorized to Participate in GCP](#) (GCP, Revised 2016)
- [CFIA Approved Facilities Authorized to Participate in GCP](#) (GCP, Revised 2016)

For More Information

For more information, or if you have questions about the GCP, please send inquiries to ppqexportservices@usda.gov.

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U.S. Nursery Certification Program (USNCP) Pilot

The USNCP is a pilot phytosanitary certification program for United States nurseries that ship nursery stock to Canada. The USNCP uses a Phytosanitary Management System (PSMS) to minimize pest risks so that plants consistently meet Canadian import requirements. The program offers an alternative to traditional phytosanitary certification for shipments to Canada.

- [USNCP Certification Standards](#) (574.76 KB)

For More Information

For more information, or if you have questions about the USNCP, please send inquiries to ppgexportservices@usda.gov.

European Union (EU) Ash Systems Approach Program

The EU Ash Systems Approach Program provides an alternative treatment to required 1 inch (2.5 centimeters) bark and material beneath the bark that is currently required for ash lumber shipments to the European Union. Companies are able to enroll in an APHIS-approved certification program with the National Hardwood Lumber Association. Member companies may then ship KD lumber with limited amounts of bark present.

View the [Participant List](#) for approved facilities.

Ralstonia Exclusion Program

USDA regulates *Ralstonia solanacearum* race 3 biovar 2 (Rs R3bv2), a select agent pathogen that poses a severe threat to important U.S. agricultural commodities such as tomatoes, potatoes, and eggplants. Rs R3bv2 was listed as a select agent in the USDA Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002. In 2005, APHIS amended the regulations (70 FR 61351) to establish a certification program for articles of *Pelargonium* spp. and *Solanum* spp. imported from countries where the bacterium (Rs R3bv2) is known to occur. For *Pelargonium* spp. imports, the certification program followed the [Minimum Sanitation Protocol for Offshore Geranium Cutting Production](#) (1017.54 KB).

In 2024, APHIS is implementing an [updated framework](#) (769.81 KB) for all Rs R3bv2 host commodities under the Ralstonia Exclusion Program (REP). The REP framework will be a basis for bilateral operational work plans allowing imports of Rs R3bv2 host plants under the REP from countries where the select agent is known to occur. The

framework closes known sanitation and testing gaps in earlier protocols and clarifies roles and responsibilities of all program participants. It also provides updated standard operating procedures to execute following an Rs R3bv2 detection. APHIS plans to roll out the REP in June 2024.

[Learn More About the Ralstonia Exclusion Program](#)

Offshore Greenhouse Certification Program

In 2017, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) and the U.S. nursery industry worked together under a pilot program to determine whether greenhouse certification can effectively mitigate pest and disease risks associated with generally admissible unrooted plant cuttings produced in offshore facilities. The pilot demonstrated that growing plants in certified greenhouses under a systems approach can effectively mitigate most pest risk offshore, safeguarding American agriculture and natural resources. In June 2020, PPQ announced the establishment of the Offshore Greenhouse Certification Program (OGCP). Facilities that participate in the program may benefit from a reduced inspection frequency at the U.S. plant inspection stations for shipments.

[Learn More About the Offshore Greenhouse Certification Program](#)

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