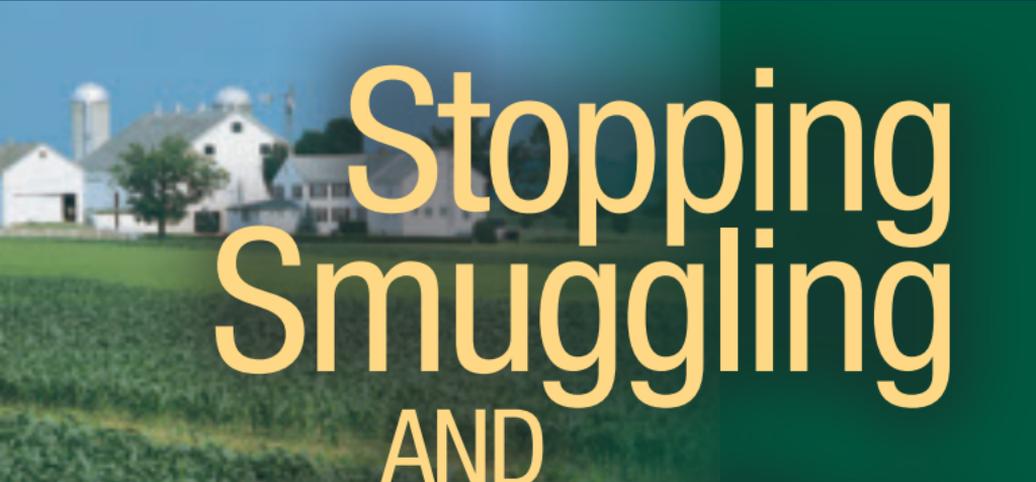




United States Department of Agriculture

A photograph of a white farm building with a silo and a green field in the background, serving as the backdrop for the top half of the title.

# Stopping Smuggling AND Promoting Safe Trade

A photograph of a man in a khaki shirt and cap using a handheld scanner in a warehouse filled with cardboard boxes and white bags.

## On the Watch for U.S. Agriculture

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service  
Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance

**REPORT AGRICULTURAL SMUGGLING AT:**

**1-800-877-3835 or [SITC.Mail@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:SITC.Mail@aphis.usda.gov)**



**Global trade and travel—vast, fast-paced, and constantly growing—bring increased risks for one of our country’s greatest resources: agriculture.**

While the wide array of foreign foods, plants, and processed products available in the U.S. marketplace enriches our lives, these items can also carry invasive pests and diseases that do not yet have a foothold in America. Most foreign products enter the United States legally, through a system of certifications, treatments, and inspections designed to keep agricultural pests and diseases out of the country. However, products occasionally bypass that system and enter the United States illegally, in some cases because of deliberate efforts to smuggle them.

Pests and diseases in infested shipments can devastate our country’s agricultural production and the American landscape. Exotic fruit flies, non-native wood-boring insects, invasive weeds, and foreign animal diseases are just a few examples of the intruders that could come into the country this way, with staggering costs for the United States: billions in lost production and export markets, millions more for pest and disease management expenses, increased



*These assorted fruits and vegetables were seized from arriving passengers at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York. Foreign produce can bring non-native pests and diseases into the United States, resulting in crop losses, increased production costs, and environmental damage. (USDA, Erich Glasgow)*

**U.S. agriculture supports  
1 in 12 jobs and provides  
our Nation's consumers  
with more than 80 percent  
of the food we eat.**

prices for food and other agricultural goods, and often serious damage to our native ecosystem.

Most of the time, pests and diseases can travel far distances—across oceans and national borders—only with help from people. Mailing or shipping agricultural goods or carrying them with you on your travels may seem harmless, but without knowing it, you could end up helping invasive pests or diseases hitchhike to new locations. To reduce this threat, the Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance (SITC) program, part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), continuously monitors the movement of foreign agricultural products in commerce. One of our most important partners in this effort is you.

# What We Do

**SITC** conducts risk-based inspections, analyzes import data, and reaches out to industry and the public to stop the entry and distribution of unlawful agricultural goods. When SITC officers find a product that should not be here, we take steps to prevent potential pests or diseases from spreading. This typically includes seizing the product, destroying it by quarantine-approved means, and tracing the shipment forward and backward to see what pathway it traveled. By intervening early, we can stop pests and diseases before they move too far. In certain cases, we may also issue a violation against those responsible for the commodity—leading to fines, criminal prosecution, or both.





*During a joint operation with their State counterparts, SITC officers verify a shipment of nursery stock in the back of a truck trailer at a California-Oregon border crossing. Nursery stock is a significant pathway for the movement of invasive plant pests and diseases. (USDA, Owen Shiozaki)*



*A SITC officer looks for insects and diseases on fresh citrus leaves seized at the airport in a passenger's international baggage. (USDA, Margaret Shore)*



*While surveying a retail market for products that may have bypassed USDA import requirements, a SITC officer examines a box of foreign preserved eggs. (USDA, Dan Moore)*

## On the Watch

SITC officers work across the country to carry out this mission. We check wholesale markets, distribution points, retail stores, restaurants, and the Internet to look for prohibited agricultural commodities. We also partner with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and other government agencies in anti-smuggling efforts at air, land, and sea ports-of-entry nationwide, using a variety of survey, analytical, and intelligence tools to get the job done.

In addition, our staff reaches out directly to importers, distributors, merchants, and the public to explain U.S. import requirements. By visiting a broad range of community events and venues—such as agricultural fairs, schools, foreign student orientations, trade shows, and others—we talk with as many people as we can to promote the safe and legal trade of agricultural products in our country.



In response to a tip from an alert citizen, SITC officers seized more than 1,200 giant African snails—one of the most damaging snails in the world—that had been illegally imported into the United States.





*A smuggler attempted to send these citrus seeds, declared as "documents," to the United States from Uruguay through a commercial courier service. The seeds were concealed in hollowed-out phone books. (USDA, Louis Volpe)*



# Do Your Part

The public contributes significantly to the success of our work. You, too, can help support SITC in defending U.S. agriculture and natural resources from foreign pests and diseases.

**First**, find out what's allowed before bringing agricultural products into the United States from other countries or moving them interstate.

**Second**, once you know, follow the proper procedures, and be sure to double-check the regulations before each shipment. Pest and disease situations can change rapidly—just because something was eligible for import once doesn't mean it will be in the future. If you have any questions, call or email us. SITC officers are available to explain Federal agricultural regulations and permit procedures.

**Third**, if you think something was imported illegally—even if unintentionally—report it at **1-800-877-3835** or **SITC.Mail@aphis.usda.gov**.

*SITC officers reach out to a homeowner about the import of foreign agricultural products. The rise in online and mail-order shopping has made many such products available directly from the comfort of home. Unfortunately, some of these items are shipped to the United States in violation of USDA restrictions. (USDA, Louis Volpe)*

# U.S. Import Requirements: What You Need To Know

The following items may be restricted or prohibited from entering the United States:

- Plants and seeds for planting
- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Dried and processed plant products (e.g., rice, herbs, citrus peel, handicrafts)
- Soil
- Live insects and snails, including their eggs
- Meats, cheeses, and other animal products
- Live animals (including pet birds)
- Hatching eggs
- Certain species of freshwater fish (including koi and goldfish)
- Hides and racks from certain animals
- Animal byproducts and germplasm

*SITC officers in San Juan, PR, inspect air cargo for illegal agricultural products.  
(USDA, R. Anson Eaglin)*

In some cases, these items may be allowed if they are accompanied by proper paperwork—such as a health certificate issued by the government of the country from which the item will ship, a specific permit from USDA, or proof of an approved treatment that eliminates any pests of concern. For more information on import requirements and USDA permits, go to [www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/permits](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/permits).



The SITC program works with several major e-commerce companies to identify agricultural products for sale on their sites that cannot be legally imported into the United States.

Whenever possible, the companies remove these products from their sites to prevent unsuspecting U.S. consumers from buying them.





*A SITC officer and a USDA investigator discover specimens of giant African snail on residential backyard shrubs. This exotic pest feeds on more than 500 types of plants, damaging both ornamental landscapes and agricultural production. It can also transmit harmful parasites to people. (USDA, Ramon Montalvo)*

## Importing Plants and Plant Products

For incoming shipments of plants and seeds meant for planting, phytosanitary certificates from the country of export show that the shipment is free of pests and diseases we don't want in the United States. In general, anyone wishing to import plants and seeds for planting, as well as certain other plant products, must obtain a phytosanitary certificate for each shipment.

Various import restrictions also apply to most fresh fruits, vegetables, and many dried or processed plant products that can harbor pests, depending on the country of origin. Soil, because of the many pathogens it can contain, requires a specific permit to enter the United States, as do live insects and snails in any life stage, including their eggs.

# Importing Animals and Animal Products

Live animals and their byproducts can transmit many harmful diseases to U.S. poultry or livestock populations: for example, avian influenza, exotic Newcastle disease, foot-and-mouth disease, or swine fever. As a result, meats, cheeses, extracts, hides, feathers, and other animal products from foreign countries often need USDA permits and proper certification to meet U.S. import requirements.

*A U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agriculture specialist, with assistance from SITC, inspects a parcel arriving in the United States at an international mail processing facility. (USDA, Erich Glasgow)*



# Contact Us

You can learn more about SITC at  
**[www.aphis.usda.gov/sitc](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/sitc)**.

If you have any questions about the SITC program or suspect something was imported without proper clearance, please call the SITC hotline toll free at **1-800-877-3835** or email **[SITC.Mail@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:SITC.Mail@aphis.usda.gov)**.

To reach a local officer directly, call your nearest USDA State Plant Health Director's office and ask to speak with SITC. Go to **[www.aphis.usda.gov/planthealth/sphd](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/planthealth/sphd)** for a list of offices and contact information.

If you have questions about importing agricultural products or obtaining a permit, you may also contact the national offices below.

## Plants and Plant Products

Permit Unit, Plant Protection and Quarantine  
USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service  
4700 River Road, Unit 133  
Riverdale, MD 20737  
Phone: (877) 770-5990  
Fax: (301) 734-5786  
Email: **[plantproducts.permits@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:plantproducts.permits@aphis.usda.gov)**

## Animals and Animal Products

National Import Export Services, Veterinary Services  
USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service  
4700 River Road, Unit 40  
Riverdale, MD 20737  
Phone: (301) 851-3300  
Fax: (301) 734-4704/8226  
Email: **[VS-Live.Animals\\_Import.Permits@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:VS-Live.Animals_Import.Permits@aphis.usda.gov)** (live animals)

**[AskNIES.Products@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:AskNIES.Products@aphis.usda.gov)**  
(animal products)

VS Service Centers Directory: **[www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/downloads/nies\\_contacts/sc.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/downloads/nies_contacts/sc.pdf)**

*Cover Photos: (top) Farmhouse and farm. (Stockbyte/Getty Images)  
(bottom) A SITC officer checks bulk agricultural commodities  
at a warehouse site. (USDA, Arianna Covington)*

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

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