



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs
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USDA ANNOUNCES AVAILABILITY OF PEST RISK ANALYSIS FOR THE IMPORTATION OF GUATEMALAN BLUEBERRIES

WASHINGTON, Feb. 12, 2008--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) today announced the availability of a pest risk analysis, for review and comment, evaluating the risk associated with the importation of blueberries from Guatemala under the agency's new streamlined approval process.

Based on the analysis, APHIS determined that Guatemalan blueberries can be brought safely into the continental United States subject to one or more of the five designated phytosanitary measures under the new notice-based approval process, and are therefore eligible for the streamlined approach. If approved for import, the blueberries would have to be part of a commercial shipment and undergo cold treatment in accordance with the regulations. The fruit also would need to be accompanied by a phytosanitary certificate issued by the Guatemalan national plant protection organization and would be subject to inspection at the port of entry. This action would allow the importation of blueberries into the continental United States from Guatemala while protecting against the introduction of plant pests, such as the Mediterranean fruit fly.

On July 18, 2007, USDA published a final rule which streamlined an approval process for importing certain fruits and vegetables under what is known as the Quarantine 56 (Q56) regulations. Q56 pertains to the prohibitions and restrictions concerning the importation of fruits and vegetables into the United States. While the new process continues to provide stringent protections for U.S. agriculture, it employs notices rather than lengthier rulemaking to solicit public involvement in the approval process. It is a less time-consuming approach that allows USDA plant health specialists to focus on more complex domestic and import issues.

Under the new process, a commodity becomes eligible if the risk analysis demonstrates that it can be brought safely into the United States subject to one or more of the five designated phytosanitary measures. These measures include port-of-entry inspection, approved postharvest treatment, a phytosanitary certificate verifying that the commodity originated from a pest-free area, a phytosanitary certificate verifying that the commodity is free from a specified pest or pests or that the risk associated with the commodity can be mitigated through commercial practices. A notice announcing the availability of the pest risk analysis is then published in the *Federal Register* with the opportunity for public comment. After the comment period ends, all comments are considered and if appropriate, a notice is published in the *Federal Register* announcing that USDA will begin issuing import permits for the commodity.

To learn more about the revisions made to USDA's fruit and vegetable regulations, please go to www.aphis.usda.gov and click on the Quarantine 56 hot issues link.

This notice was published in the Feb. 7 *Federal Register*.

Consideration will be given to comments received on or before April 7. Send an original and two copies of postal mail or commercial delivery comments to Docket No. APHIS-2008-0025, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3A-03.8, 4700 River Road, Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238. Comments can be submitted on the Federal eRulemaking portal at <http://www.regulations.gov/fdmspublic/component/main?main=DocketDetail&d=APHIS-2008-0025>. Click on "Add Comments" to view public comments and related materials available electronically.

Comments are posted on the Regulations.gov Web site and also can be reviewed at USDA, Room 1141, South Building, 14th St. and Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. To facilitate entry into the comment reading room, please call (202) 690-2817.

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