



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Plant Protection and Quarantine



Smuggling Interdiction & Trade Compliance (SITC) and e-commerce

SITC's Mission

- The mission of PPQ's Smuggling Interdiction & Trade Compliance (SITC) Program is to detect and prevent the unlawful entry and distribution of prohibited and/or non-compliant products that may harbor exotic plant and animal pests, disease or invasive species.
- Utilize SNICAS to document pathways

The SNICAS system is a collection of records and files organized to keep track of SITC activities that include:

Site Surveys

Seizures

Traces

Survey Plans

Violations

Commerce Sites

Product Information

Staff

Targeting Requests

Interagency Requests

User and QA Reports

Discussions

Field Analysts

- Boise, ID
- Chicago, IL
- Houston, TX
- Los Angeles, CA
- Sacramento, CA
- Seattle, WA
- Direct support to SITC personnel in areas of coverage
- Pre & Post operation analysis
- Targeted survey support
- Respond to targeting requests

Hub Analysts

- Located in Raleigh, NC
- Respond to data requests that are national in scope
- Represent SITC at hub & headquarter meetings
- Create statistical & yearly reports on SITC activities
- Staff the SITC Internet Team (SIT)

SITC Internet Team (SIT)

- The SITC Internet Team consists of the two hub analysts based in Raleigh, NC
 - Julie Hong-Sakowski
 - Cory Marker
- Purpose: To monitor internet sites for prohibited agricultural commodities

eCommerce

- The buying, selling or trading of products via internet sites and mobile applications
- For SITC's purpose, we work with or utilize:
 - Virtual storefronts – stores with online catalogs but not necessarily ability to order online
 - Buying/selling/trading on websites, forums, online marketplaces and social apps
 - Gathering data through forums, sites and social media
 - Working with internet companies to exchange data, ideas to close pathways and gain seller compliance

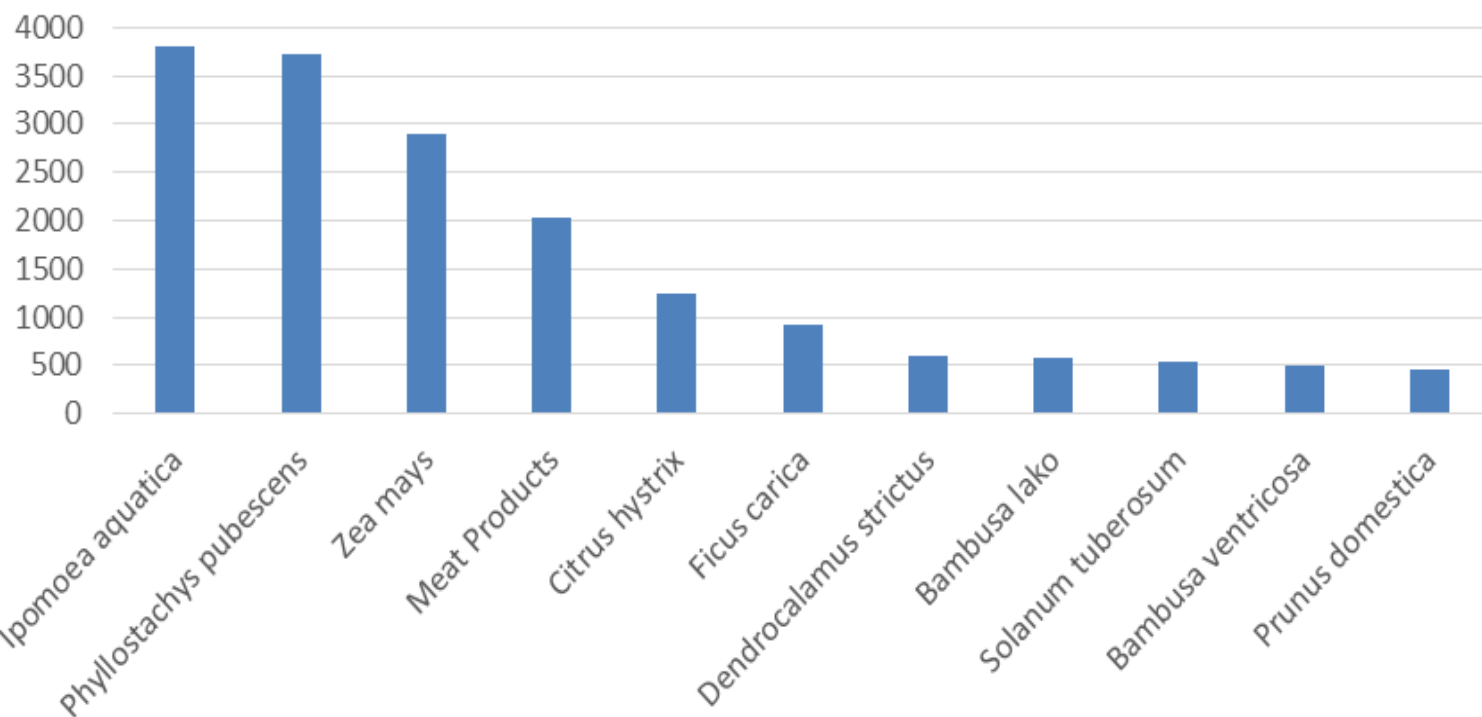
Policy

- The SIT does *not* engage in chat rooms and forums for entrapment reasons but do monitor them

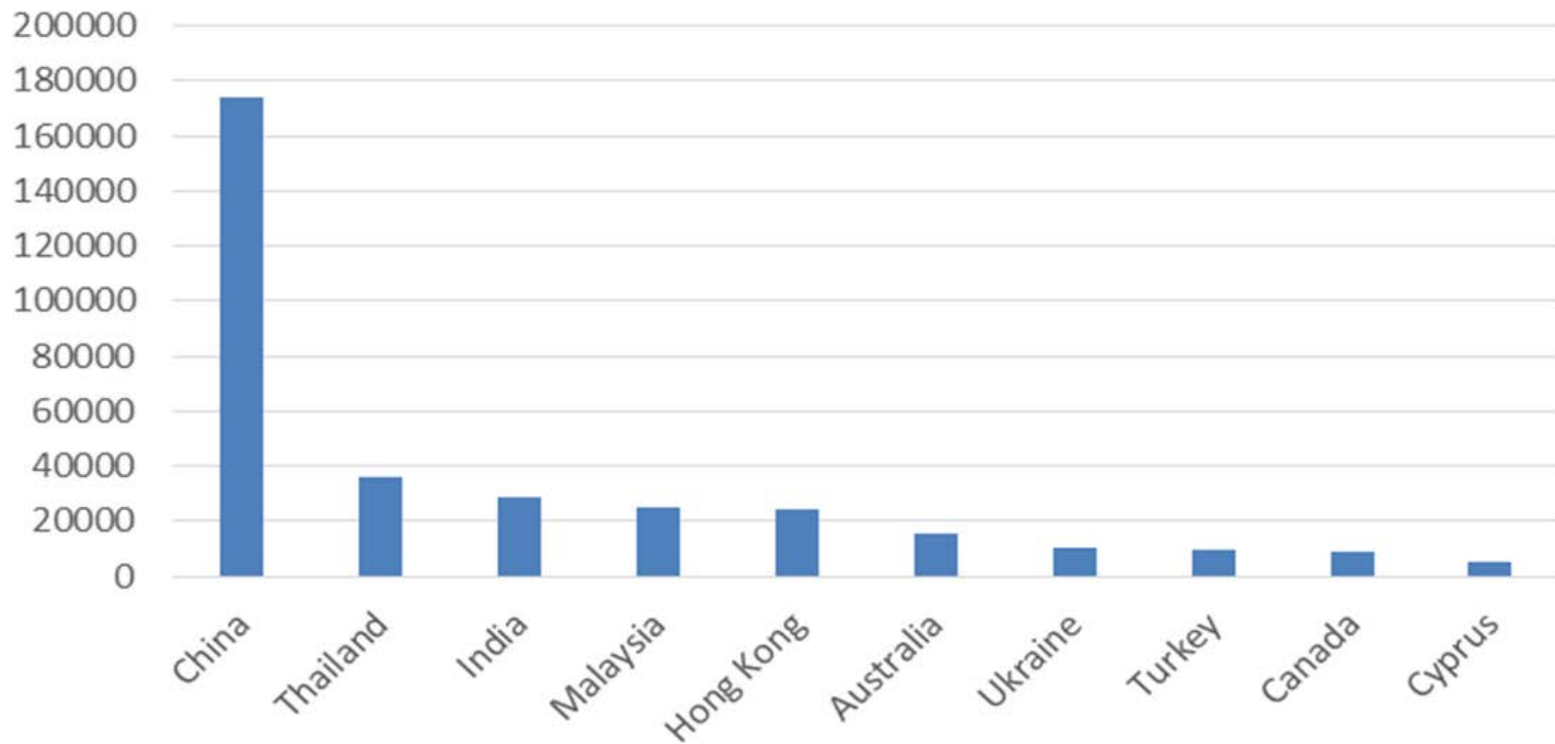
Commodity Focus

- Top priority
 - Anything outright prohibited under 7CFR319 or 9CFR94 or 95
 - Mis-manifested/smuggled
- Second tier
 - Post-entry quarantine
 - Permitted items
- Third tier
 - Phyto, CITES

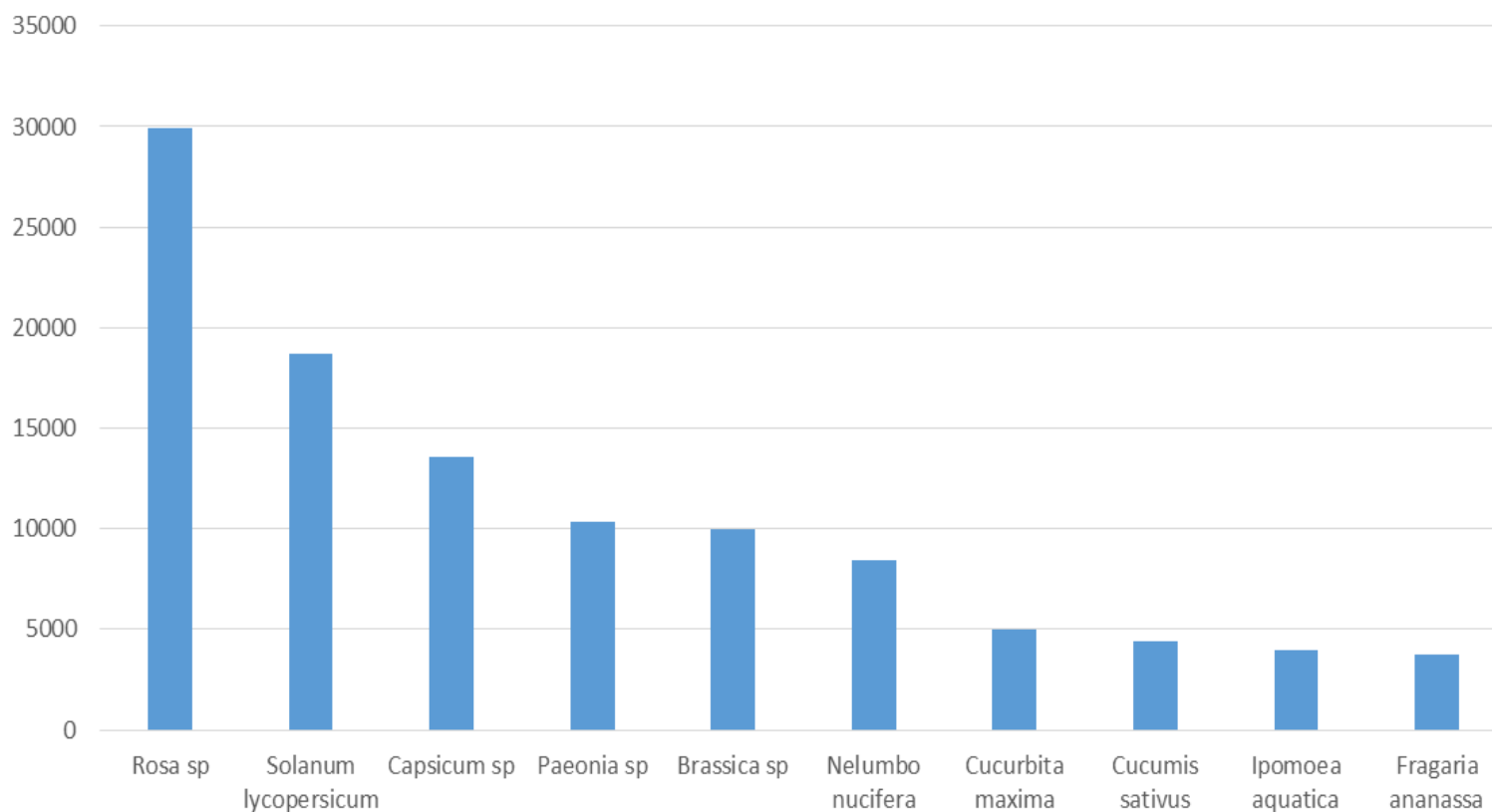
Top 10 Prohibited Purchases



Top 10 Countries for Shipments



Top 10 Prop. Material Shipped to US



Regional Differences

- Depending on what you're looking for determines where you look
 - Seeds & FNW: Asia
 - Bonsai
 - EU – primarily UK & France
 - A bit from Japan
 - Cuttings: EU & Middle East
 - Figs are HUGE – Spain, Israel, Turkey

Acquiring Leads

- Tips from HQ, field, other agencies and industry
- Our own sleuthing
- WebCrawler

Problems

- Usernames – can be hard to determine who's who
- Host/domain's - use of proxy to mask owner of site
- IP gives away who you are (for those paying attention)
- Increasing use of social apps
- Multiple sites – change sites they're selling on
 - Different agreements/no agreements
 - What info they'll give you

The Big 3

- Majority of our work is with these companies
- Unique relationship with each
 - Development & implementation of filters for all 3
 - Removal of listings and banning of sellers based on evidence
 - etsy gave us an official account for outreach

Trending

- Facebook
 - Groups
 - Private & public groups
 - Marketplace
 - Sell/trade anything w/in a geographic area
 - Easier to ID people
 - Big problem: use of PM's to actually show list &/or order

Trending

- Social/Mobile App's
 - QQ International (caters to Chinese community)
 - WeChat (currently caters to Chinese community)
 - Weee! (used via Facebook)
 - OfferUp
 - Whatsapp
 - Craigslist

Social/Mobile Apps

- Use of phone #'s as ID
 - Must “friend” someone to get in their circle
- For the Chinese-centric, use of Chinese language
- Send menu of items via text
- Acquiring proof is very hard
- App companies liable?
- Very big for us for movement of meat products
 - Haven't seen a lot of plant movement yet

Plant Protection and Quarantine

gardener2005

Baton Rouge area,
LA

(Zone 8b)

November 19, 2007

10:11 PM

Post #4211174

I have thought of disguising seeds to help people avoid temptation provided they were legal of course. X's idea of chocolate covered canna seeds might work. I even thought of putting the packs of seeds fixed so they don't "shake" in a new pack of socks from the store enclosed with a greeting card "Stay warm this winter" Love, Aunt Karen :)

This message was edited Nov 19, 2007 4:13 PM

Tuinkabouter

's-Gravenhage
Netherlands

(Zone 8b)

December 31, 2007

7:00 AM

Post #4343063

I always write "Contains Collectibles" on the envelope. Seems to work. Out of the 30 or so envelopes I sent, only 1 got confiscated. Guess what, in Chicago...

If you want to be really sure, put the seeds in an envelope with a company logo, this seems to work too!

Tuinkabouter (from The Netherlands)

evr
Toronto, ON
(Zone 5b)
September 10,
2008
12:01 PM
[Post #5532966](#)

re: chocolate covered canna seeds. That's a genius idea!!!! it reminds me of that Tylenol commercial where an old prisoner receives a birthday cake from his wife..and then all of a sudden he mashes the cake to get a file so he can escape from the prison lol.

For customs, I've labeled them as "beads" lol. The rest I send them in a normal white env. so I don't declare them with anything - This is how I sent mine because this is how I packed my first trade with another US DG member. She sent hers in a birthday card which was an excellent idea. But I think Canada is not as strict as the US - I've received bubblers that says "Live Plants" on the outside, and it never got confiscated. I've also had custom declarations from the US stating that they are "garden seeds" and they still got through Canada.

I've sent one to DE in a white env. but it was obvious that it's not just a normal document because the seeds were quite big. This never reached its destination...soooo I had to put it in a bubbler and declare it. I don't know yet if he's received them..

Success

- Agreements with the 3 major ecommerce sites as well as increasing number of smaller companies & start-ups
- Two major companies agreed to implement filters to block prohibited items from being sold
- Prohibited items are often removed upon request
- An increase of disclaimers or not offering prohibited products
- Increasing number of sellers no longer registered
- Sites have been banning vendors based on manifesting, ignoring compliance regulations and feedback

Future/Collaboration

- Continued work w/CBP
- Continued relationship w/online entities
 - Filters, outreach
 - Developing relationships w/new companies as they start
- Ad blitzes & other online blitzes
- Increased collaboration with foreign governments
 - NAPPO, IPPC, QUADS

Questions?

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