

National Plant Board Meeting New Accreditation Regulation

ISSUE:

PPQ is drafting a regulation to expand its authority to accredit, certify, and/or authorize private entities to perform certain functions in support of APHIS' import-export obligations.

BACKGROUND:

In 1999 and 2001, APHIS published 2 regulations that created the National Seed Health System (NSHS), which allows for the accreditation of public and private entities to perform lab testing, seed sampling, field and visual inspection of seed stock for export. The NSHS has been successful and has generated interest from these private entities to expand functions for certification for both import and export shipments of different commodities.

DISCUSSION:

EXPORTS

APHIS has faced increased challenges as global trade has improved over the past few years due to a greater demand and more recently the weaker U.S. dollar. Industry has been utilizing extensive transportation to move commodities from point of production with great efficiency. The increased demand is extending APHIS' resources as we are faced with the broadened scope of inspection and treatment, instead of the traditional inspection, treatment, and certification at the port of entry. The use of accredited entities to perform selected functions would allow APHIS to deliver better service to exporters so that shipments are exported in a timely manner.

IMPORTS

APHIS has also taken steps to increase off-shore mitigations of imported commodities. These programs have placed an increased resource drain on our ability to deliver services. Accreditation of entities to perform the mitigations off-shore allows for a better usage of APHIS' resources, and greater protection of our assets overseas.

CURRENT ACCREDITATION

Currently, PPQ coordinates approximately eleven different accreditation or certification programs in the United States under many different forms of control. PPQ would like all the accreditation programs to operate under a common framework making all participants subject to the same standards. The new rule will allow APHIS to present national unified programs as viable alternative to other programs favored by some of our trading partners. In addition, the new rule will enable APHIS to join and participate in accreditation programs with other Federal government agencies that have commonalities with the APHIS mission.

As with the previous regulations, accreditations will be voluntary to join. The accreditations will be performed as a cost recovery program as mandated by Congress.

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