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September 18, 2017

Osama El-Lissy  
Deputy Administrator for Plant Protection and Quarantine  
USDA APHIS PPQ  
Jamie L. Whitten Federal Building  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Osama,

The need for clear, accurate and timely communication between APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) and the National Plant Board (NPB) is essential to the development and implementation of effective agricultural safeguarding programs and policies. The NPB wishes to convey our appreciation to PPQ for the actions taken this year to improve communications between the NPB and PPQ. The NPB recognizes the resources in personnel and attention that PPQ has invested in our mutual effort to improve communication between PPQ and NPB members. The NPB encourages PPQ to continue in this joint effort to ensure effective communication, as a commitment to our shared mission of safeguarding American agriculture.

The partnership between PPQ and the NPB has been formalized as a Strategic Alliance in a document signed by you and the NPB President. However, in 2015, the leadership of PPQ and the NPB recognized that significant turnover in both organizations and repeated restructurings within PPQ had resulted in a loss of operational knowledge of communication protocols and their purpose, resulting in barriers to effective communication and engagement. Based on this, PPQ and the NPB agreed on the need to reactivate the Interagency Relations Committee (IRC) and made it the top Strategic Alliance priority. The IRC has made substantial progress this year in understanding and evaluating key impediments to good communication between PPQ and NPB members. Drawing on case studies and focus groups conducted over the past 2 years the IRC has developed updated communication protocols and action plans for key communication focus areas.

Now that the IRC has been moved into the Strategic Alliance initiative, the NPB encourages PPQ to continue to make this effort to improve interagency communications the top priority. The NPB recognizes that communication is a shared responsibility which requires a continued commitment by both parties. The NPB appreciates the focus and resources that PPQ has put toward improving communication and believes that joint implementation of the Phase 2 Action Plans outlined in the June 2017 IRC report will result in continued improvement in communications and allow us to more efficiently and effectively further our mutual interests in safeguarding plants and natural resources.

September 18, 2017  
NPB/PPQ Communications

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "E. Ann Gibbs". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "E" and "G".

Ann Gibbs, President  
National Plant Board

CC:

Paula Henstridge, Assistant Deputy Administrator, USDA APHIS PPQ  
Alan Dowdy, Associate Deputy Administrator, USDA APHIS PPQ  
Ron Sequeira, Deputy Administrator, USDA APHIS CPHST  
Matt Royer, Deputy Administrator, USDA APHIS PPQ  
Collin Wamsley, Central Plant Board President  
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