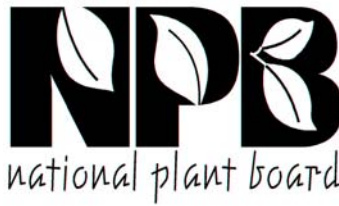


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November 18, 2015

Alan Dowdy
Assistant Deputy Administrator
Phytosanitary Issues Management
USDA-APHIS-PPQ

Re: Phytosanitary Issues Management Unit Concerns

Dear Alan:

As you know, states are dependent on the Phytosanitary Issues Management (PIM) Unit to represent their interests in the nation to nation negotiation process for international trade and the exploration of potential new markets. The National Plant Board (NPB) works collaboratively with APHIS on many issues, programs, policies and processes. The NPB leadership have received a number of contacts from states voicing frustration and concern over the lack of responsiveness of PIM staff on Market Access Requests and other trade issues that directly impact individual states.

Some recent examples that have come to our attention involve fresh ginseng, Christmas trees, logs, timber and other wood products. We are aware that there has been a high level of turnover in some of the Trade Director positions. From our member's experiences, this has led to a lack of continuity and follow through, which in turn has resulted in a lack of progress on significant trade opportunities important to our member states. From our discussions with APHIS and PPQ leadership, expanding trade opportunities and opening new markets for U.S. agricultural products is one of the highest priorities for APHIS. Obviously, this is also a high priority for each of the involved NPB states. The involved states have information and experience with the local state industries involved which has helped in past negotiations and which could aid in current and future negotiations.

With that in mind, I would like to ask if the NPB could work with you and your staff to address perceived problems, develop appropriate procedures and explore ways that the NPB may be able to support PIM to improve responsiveness to time sensitive market opportunities.

Sincerely

Joe Collins, President
National Plant Board

CC:

Paula Henstridge, Assistant Deputy Administrator, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
Regional Plant Board Presidents