



Animal and Plant
Health Inspection
Service

Plant Protection and
Quarantine

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Mr. Joe Collins
President, National Plant Board
Department of Entomology
S-225 Ag. Science Center North
University of Kentucky
Lexington, KY 40546

JAN 29 2016

Dear Mr. Collins:

RE: State Concerns about Phytosanitary Programs for Seeds

Thank you for your letter of November 20 regarding your concerns about our engagement of the National Plant Board (NPB) on phytosanitary issues with seeds. Seed health is a strategic priority of Plant Protection and Quarantine, and the NPB is an important cooperater in our efforts to manage the threat posed by seed pests.

As evidenced by the increasing number of interactions with our foreign counterparts at other National Plant Protection Organizations, seed health is of growing concern globally. To safeguard the American seed industry's standing as a global provider of quality seed to world markets, we have been working closely with the seed industry and their representatives at the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA) to ensure that American seed companies can continue to ship their product to important global markets. NPB representatives Aurelio Posadas, Brad White, and Carl Harper are invited to our Export Working Group quarterly meetings where we discuss export issues for all commodities, including seeds, with regulatory stakeholders. If other NPB members should be invited, please provide their information to Export Specialist Margaret Smither. Her phone number is 301-851-2335, and her e-mail address is <Margaret.R.Smither@aphis.usda.gov>.

Issues with seed health range beyond exports and have become increasingly complex and numerous. To better manage the variety of seed health issues, we created a national seed health coordinator position and recently hired Dr. Angela McMellen Brannigan to fill this position. Angela worked for PPQ from 2007 through 2012 in accreditation and trade programs. She was the trade director for Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and the ASEAN countries for a number of years. She left the agency and worked briefly for the New Mexico Department of Agriculture before returning to PPQ in November. We have tasked Angela with coordinating seed issues within PPQ, and she will be a single point of contact for seed concerns for our stakeholders. She is quickly coming up to speed on the issues and will reach out to you, and the rest of the NPB, in early 2016 to schedule a call to discuss current seed topics and strategies to stay better engaged on these topics. She is forming a seed cross-functional working group, and to improve communication she is making preparations for a monthly call for external stakeholders. We welcome the participation of a National Plant Board representative on the working group and monthly stakeholder call. If you would like

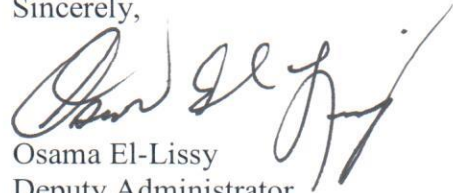
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to name a representative for the working group, please call Angela McMellen at 301-851-2314 or write to her at <Angela.McMellen-Brannigan@aphis.usda.gov>.

We look forward to working with the National Plant Board as we address phytosanitary issues with seeds.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Osama El-Lissy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Osama El-Lissy
Deputy Administrator
Plant Protection and Quarantine

pm/kaz