



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs
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USDA ALLOWS BLUEBERRIES FROM GUATEMALA UNDER STREAMLINED PROCESS

WASHINGTON, April 30, 2008--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) will begin issuing permits under the agency's streamlined process for blueberries from Guatemala into the United States.

APHIS published the pest risk analysis for blueberries from Guatemala on Feb. 7. Based upon the analysis, APHIS determined that Guatemalan blueberries can be brought safely into the continental United States subject to one or more of the five designated phytosanitary measures, and are therefore eligible for the streamlined approach.

To be eligible for importation, the blueberries must be part of a commercial shipment and undergo cold treatment in accordance with the regulations. The fruit also must be accompanied by a phytosanitary certificate issued by the Guatemalan national plant protection organization and is subject to inspection at the port of entry. While this action allows blueberries from Guatemala to be imported into the continental United States, these measures will continue protecting the U.S. against the introduction of plant pests, such as Mediterranean fruit fly.

In July 2007, USDA published a final rule which streamlined an approval process for importing certain fruits and vegetables under what is known as the Quarantine 56 (Q56) regulations. Q56 pertains to the prohibitions and restrictions concerning the importation of fruits and vegetables into the United States. While this new process continues to provide stringent protections for U.S. agriculture, it employs notices rather than lengthier rulemaking to solicit public involvement in the approval process. It is a less time-consuming approach that allows USDA plant health specialists to focus on more complex domestic and import issues.

Under the new process, a commodity becomes eligible if the risk analysis demonstrates that it can be brought safely into the United States subject to one or more of the five designated phytosanitary measures. The measures include port-of-entry inspection; approved postharvest treatment; a phytosanitary certificate verifying that the commodity originated from a pest-free area; as well as a phytosanitary certificate verifying that the commodity is free from a specified pest or pests or that the risk associated with the commodity can be mitigated through commercial practices. A notice announcing the availability of the pest risk analysis then is published in the *Federal Register* with the opportunity for public comment.

After the comment period ends, all comments are considered and if appropriate, a notice is published in the *Federal Register* announcing that USDA will begin issuing import permits for the commodity.

To learn more about the revisions made to USDA's fruit and vegetable regulations, go to www.aphis.usda.gov and click on the Quarantine 56 hot issues link.

This notice is scheduled to be published in the May 1 *Federal Register* and becomes effective upon publication.

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