

USDA Requirements Guide

Agricultural commodity permits, inspections, and restricted goods for US imports.

The US Department of Agriculture, through its Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), regulates imports that could introduce plant pests, animal diseases, or invasive species. This guide covers the core requirements for importing agricultural commodities into the US.

1. Determine If APHIS Permits Are Required

Common categories requiring APHIS review include:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Live plants, seeds, and cut flowers
- Meat, poultry, and animal byproducts
- Wood packaging and dunnage
- Live animals and animal germplasm

2. Apply for the Correct Permit

APHIS issues different permit types depending on commodity — plant import permits, veterinary permits, and biotechnology permits are the most common for commercial importers. Permits must be obtained before the shipment arrives; applying after the fact will not prevent a hold at the port.

3. Wood Packaging Material (WPM) Rules

Wood packaging — pallets, crates, and dunnage — must be heat-treated or fumigated per ISPM-15 international standards and bear the official IPPC stamp. Non-compliant wood packaging can result in the entire shipment being re-exported or destroyed at the importer's expense.

4. Restricted and Prohibited Items

Category	Status
Soil from most countries	Prohibited
Fresh fruit from certain regions	Restricted — pest-specific treatment required
Untreated wood packaging	Prohibited without ISPM-15 treatment
Certain live plants	Permit and phytosanitary certificate required

Meat/dairy from FMD-affected countries	Restricted or prohibited
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5. Phytosanitary Certificates

Most plant and plant-product imports require a Phytosanitary Certificate issued by the exporting country's national plant protection organization, certifying the shipment is free of pests and disease. This certificate must accompany the shipment — it cannot be obtained retroactively.

Advante coordinates APHIS permit verification, phytosanitary certificate review, and wood packaging compliance checks as part of our import clearance service for agricultural commodities.