



United States Department of Agriculture

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Food Safety and
Inspection Service

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Washington, D.C.
20250

Dr. E.A. Nepoklonov
Deputy Head
Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance Service (VPSS)
Ministry of Agriculture of the Russian Federation
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Dear Dr. Nepoklonov:

On February 13, 2017, you received a letter from the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) stating that the Public Health Information System (PHIS) Export Component would begin on June 29, 2017. I am writing to provide updated information about our plans to launch the PHIS Export Component. As is noted below, FSIS will not launch the PHIS Export Component until June 29, 2018.

As you may recall, on June 29, 2016, the FSIS published a final export rule (Docket No. FSIS-2009-0026; Electronic Export Application and Certification Charge; Flexibility in the Requirements for Export Inspection Marks, Devices, and Certificates; Egg Products Export Certification). The rule can be found online at <http://bit.ly/2j0rc38>, and was also notified to the World Trade Organization (G/TBT/N/USA/678/Add.1). This final rule provides for an electronic export application and certification system – the PHIS Export Component – in the meat, poultry, and egg product regulations.

We previously communicated to you via letter that the PHIS Export Component would begin on June 29, 2017. However, to ensure thorough testing and outreach to all stakeholders, FSIS is extending the initial implementation date by one year to June 29, 2018. For the initial phase, FSIS will implement the PHIS Export Component with a limited number of countries, and then gradually expand implementation to additional countries. FSIS will provide, at a later date, a schedule of countries for implementation in preparation for June 29, 2018.

This letter provides additional details on the types of export certification to be generated by PHIS. It also provides information about how commercial container and seal numbers will be communicated upon implementation of the PHIS Export Component.

On June 29, 2018, the PHIS Export Component will have the ability to digitally sign export certificates from the FSIS certifying official. This feature will provide an additional assurance and layer of security for the importing country's government, as well as the exporter. The digital signature will include the printed name of the FSIS certifying official, and the time and date that the signature was applied. At the time the signature is applied, PHIS will execute security checks to validate that the digital signature of the FSIS official is that of the certifying official. This feature, along with other security features of the PHIS export component, such as FSIS-controlled security paper on which certificates will be printed, will provide maximum assurance that export certificates are authentic. Alternatively, FSIS will provide certificates signed by FSIS

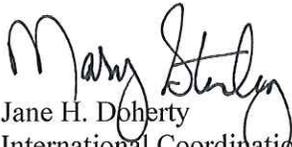
certifying officials with an ink signature, as is done currently. The export certificate, signed either digitally or with an ink signature, will be printed from the PHIS on security paper. FSIS will scan copies of all signed certification documents (e.g., FSIS Form 9060-5, letterhead certificates) into PHIS before releasing the signed original certification documents to the exporter. FSIS will continue to provide ink signatures on printed paper certificates unless the foreign country's competent authority notifies FSIS that secure digital signatures are acceptable.

With the implementation of the PHIS Export Component, your government will be able to view all signed export certificates issued by FSIS in PHIS, as a digital image, for all exported product destined for your country. Importing government officials will be able to view signed digital certificate copies within the PHIS system, through an FSIS-controlled log-in feature (Foreign Country Log-in). In addition, the original certificates will be printed on paper and will arrive with the shipment, whether FSIS inspection personnel apply the signature digitally or with ink. Therefore, importing government officials will be able to compare digital certificate copies in the FCL with the original certification documents arriving at the country's port of entry, to verify that the digital certificate copies align with the original certificates arriving with the shipment. A Level 2 eAuthentication account is necessary to access the FCL. An eAuthentication account is the way for you to interact with USDA website portals and applications using a verified identity for each User ID and profile. Prior to implementation of the PHIS Export Component, FSIS will provide further guidance on this process at a later date and in advance of the PHIS Export Component launch.

Upon implementation of the PHIS Export Component, FSIS will continue to convey commercial seal and container numbers, as requested by your country, but will do so in a different manner. Commercial seal and container numbers will not be printed on the certificate itself, but will be captured and conveyed in PHIS for your competent authority's review. The United States' industry generally obtains commercial seal and container numbers once product is loaded and sealed in a shipping container. The industry will enter the commercial seal and container numbers into PHIS through FSIS' secure network. The seal and container numbers, corresponding export certificate, and any required supplemental certification documents, will be available for review by your competent authority in PHIS via the Foreign Country Log-in feature, which you will be able to access through Level 2 eAuthentication as referenced above.

FSIS will be providing additional information as we approach the launch of this PHIS Export Component, and we welcome feedback from each country regarding the implementation of the new export features and questions about the process related to commercial seal and container numbers. Please contact FSIS at ExportsPHIS@fsis.usda.gov with any questions or comments. FSIS intends to work closely with foreign countries' competent authorities, other U.S. government agencies, industry, and all interested parties in implementing these changes.

Sincerely,


Jane H. Doherty
International Coordination Executive
Office of International Coordination