



United States Department of Agriculture

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Food Safety and
Inspection Service

1400 Independence
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Washington, D.C.
20250

Dear FAS Posts:

On June 29, 2016, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (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 notified to the World Trade Organization as well (G/TBT/N/USA/678/Add.1). I am writing to ask you for your assistance in sharing this information with your host country's relevant ministries that accept U.S. exports.

This final rule provides for an electronic export application and certification system – the Public Health Information System (PHIS) Export Component – in the meat, poultry, and egg product regulations. The PHIS Export Component will integrate and automate FSIS's paper-based export application and certification process into one comprehensive and data-driven system. FSIS will begin phasing in the PHIS Export Component on June 29, 2017.

The final rule also provides U.S. exporters with more flexible options to mark meat, poultry, or egg products with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) export stamp or an alternative unique identifier, and makes parallel, where possible, FSIS export regulations for meat, poultry, and egg products. To provide industry and FSIS inspection program personnel more time to transition to the new egg product export requirements (9 CFR 590.407, 592.20), FSIS will begin enforcing those provisions at a date to be determined, which we will announce in advance.

Enclosed is a fact sheet that summarizes the changes in the rule, and requests responses from importing countries on those changes. The importing countries and your responses from Post are important to help FSIS facilitate a smooth transition to the PHIS Export Component. We welcome your feedback and ongoing dialogue with our trading partners on these issues. Please contact FSIS at ExportsPHIS@fsis.usda.gov and InternationalCoordination@fsis.usda.gov with any questions or comments.

We believe that FSIS' PHIS Export Component will make export certification more efficient, secure, and effective. Please be assured that FSIS will continue to certify that all meat, poultry, and egg products exported from the United States meet both U.S. and the importing country's requirements. FSIS intends to work closely with importing 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

Food Safety and Inspection Service Export Rule

Importing Country Fact Sheet

1. Export Stamping Flexibility: The USDA export stamp (see example below) bears the export certificate number, and is used to link the consignment to the corresponding export certificate. Beginning August 29, 2016, the final rule permits, subject to the importing countries' requirements, U.S. exporters to apply the stamp to 1) each outside container within a consignment, which is how the export mark is currently applied, 2) a securely enclosed pallet or pallets within the consignment (e.g. shrink-wrapped or other effective means), or 3) the closed means of conveyance transporting the consignment (e.g. rail car, air, ocean container, truck).

USDA EXPORT STAMP EXAMPLE:



2. Unique Identifier: On June 29, 2017, as an alternative to the USDA export stamp, FSIS is permitting, subject to the importing countries' requirements, exporters to use a unique identifier (e.g. alphanumeric sequence) that uniquely identifies the shipment and links it to the export certificate. FSIS is offering this alternative because of the technological advancements that have been made since the export marking and devices regulations were initially promulgated. A unique identifier could be applied to a consignment's outside containers, securely enclosed pallet or pallets, or closed means of conveyance.

3. Certificate Signature Options: The PHIS Export Component will provide paper certificates that can be signed by FSIS certifying officials with either an ink signature, as is done currently, or with a secure digital signature image derived from an official FSIS Identification card. The digital signature image will include the printed name of the certifying officer, and the time and date that the signature was made. FSIS will print paper certificates, generated by PHIS, and issue the signed paper certificates to the exporter.

4. Foreign Country Log-in: Your government will have the capability to view all export certificates issued by FSIS in PHIS, as a digital image (PDF), for product intended for your country through an FSIS-controlled log-in feature (Foreign Country Log-in). You may access the Foreign Country Log-in using USDA's Level 2 eAuthentication. An eAuthentication account is a 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 notify you when it is time to register for Level 2 eAuthentication. To learn more about Level 2 eAuthentication and how to register for an account, please visit

<https://www.eauth.usda.gov/MainPages/eauthWhatIsAccount.aspx>.

5. Export eCert: In the future, FSIS also intends to support electronic export certification (eCert) in PHIS. eCert is the government-to-government transmission of certification data and is the electronic equivalent of a paper certificate. When developed and implemented, electronic export certification will allow FSIS to transfer certification data directly to the foreign government's competent authority's certification system.

6. Phased-in Implementation: FSIS is developing a phased-in implementation plan of the PHIS Export Component. Initially, beginning in June 29, 2017, FSIS will implement the PHIS Export Component with a limited number of importing countries, and then gradually expand implementation to additional countries. FSIS will provide additional information on the scheduling of countries for phased-in implementation, in preparation for June 29, 2017.

Questions for Importing Countries:

Question 1: Would your country accept the USDA export stamp or a unique identifier applied to each container, a securely enclosed pallet, or means of conveyance?

Question 2: Will your country requirements accept an alternative unique identifier that links the product to the export certificate instead of the traditional USDA export stamp?

Question 3: What are your country's requirements for certificate signatures (i.e. ink or secure digital signature)? We will continue to provide ink signatures on printed paper unless we hear from you that a secure digital signature is acceptable.

Question 4: While participation in the Foreign Country Log-in is not required, does your country plan to register for a Level 2 eAuthentication account?

Question 5: Is your country interested in receiving eCert from FSIS in the future, and what are your current or planned eCert capabilities?