

Import Industry Advice Notice – Temporary changes to certification requirements for imported fresh produce, cut flowers, plants and other plant based commodities

Who does this notice affect?

Importers of horticultural fresh produce, cut flowers, plants and other plant based commodities.

This temporary change is relevant to the use of original paper phytosanitary certificates (PCs). It does not apply to countries that already provide original PCs in electronic format, for example, ePhytos or eCerts.

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic is impacting the movement of airfreight and courier mail in multiple countries.

This has led some exporting country NPPOs to advise us that they are unable to provide original paper-based PCs with import consignments of a range of imported fresh produce, cut flowers, plants, plant products, and other regulated articles, as per our requirements.

Interim arrangements

Where an importer is unable to supply the original paper PC from the exporting country NPPO as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, our inspection officers will instead accept the electronic copy of the PC as lodged by brokers through our standard lodgement process.

Our inspection officers may in some cases request verification of documentation directly from the exporting NPPO or use an online tool provided by the exporting NPPO.

This temporary arrangement will be in place until 1 July 2020. Stakeholders will be notified of any extension to this arrangement closer to this date.

We will pursue any evidence of fraudulent documentation as per our standard practice.

Please note:

- Please do not email PC copies to the Department under this interim arrangement (either to the imports@agriculture.gov.au or IPPC.contactpoint@agriculture.gov.au mail boxes). Our inspection officers will access it from our Cargo Online Lodgement System (COLS).
- If the inspection officer requires verification of documentation, they will:
 - Request, via the importer or broker, that the exporting NPPO email documents directly to our relevant regional office, or
 - use an online tool managed by the exporting NPPO.
- Where a paper original is issued by the exporting NPPO, we recommend that it is attached to the goods and/or consignments to minimise potential delays at inspection.

Eligibility for interim arrangements

To be eligible, your import consignment must meet the following conditions:

- the exporting country NPPO does not already use an electronic means of transferring PCs (e.g. ePhytos or eCerts), and
- the exporting NPPO has asked to use alternatives to original paper PCs, and
- they have provided a point of contact, or an online tool so that we can verify the electronic copy before releasing the goods. This information can be emailed to us at imports@agriculture.gov.au (note, we will only accept information provided by an official government email address).

Further information

If you have questions or need further information, you can contact our Import Services team on:

- Email at [imports](mailto:imports@agriculture.gov.au)
- Phone (from within Australia): 1800 900 090
- Phone (from outside Australia): + 61 3 8318 6700

Also visit the department's [COVID-19 information hub](#) for current information and advice on changes to our services due to COVID-19.