

General Procedure for Import of Plants & Plant Products

What is Plant Quarantine

Present day plant quarantine is essentially a legally based defense system against new arrivals of exotic organisms called pests that compete with human beings for food, shelter, and health or otherwise threaten human comfort and welfare. Plant Protection Act No. 35 of 1999 of Sri Lanka considers a pest as a 'biotic agent capable of causing injury or damage or loss to plants or plant products and shall include weeds.' The same Act defines weed as 'a plant, which is competitive, persistent, pernicious and interfering with man and his activities.'

Why is Plant Quarantine Necessary

A new pest, after arrival and establishment, can rapidly develop into destructive proportions in the absence of natural enemies in the new environment. Plant pest epidemics could result in the loss of agricultural produce. This may adversely affects the food production or an existing export trade. Therefore, the main aim of plant quarantine is to prevent the entry of exotic pests into the country by enforcing laws without which it is hard to obtain compliance.

What is a Quarantine Pest

Each country may determine the dangerous pests that must be kept out, controlled, or eradicated by enforcing legal provisions. The Plant Protection Act No. 35 of 1999 considers a Quarantine pest as 'a pest of potential economic or environmental importance to any area within Sri Lanka and not yet present there, or present but not widely distributed and being officially controlled.

The Asia and Pacific Plant Protection Commission (APPPC) has made two lists (A1 and A2) of dangerous pests to help the member countries in deciding on quarantine pests:

A1 list contains dangerous pests that are not yet recorded in the Asia and Pacific region.

A2 list contains dangerous pests present but of limited distribution in some countries within the Asia and Pacific region.

What is a Regulated Pest

Some pests present in Sri Lanka may cause serious outbreaks and hence continuous control programs must be carried out. They are considered as Regulated Pests once the Minister declares them to be so.

How does an Alien Pests Gain Entry into the Country

Pests can enter a country by several ways. Some are natural means of pest spread, which cannot be prevented by enforcing laws. In contrast, there are manmade pathways of pest spread. These include (but not limited to) the following:

- Aircraft and ships.
- Passengers.
- Baggage

Plant products imported for consumption (fruits & vegetables).
Plants including vegetative planting materials and seeds.
Products manufactured from plant materials.
Cargo and containerized cargo.
Used vehicles & farm implements.
Dunnage, pallets and packing material.
Mail.
Garbage

What are Quarantine Strategies

To prevent the entry of dangerous pests into Sri Lanka, plant quarantine could adopt several strategies, such as: -

Embargo.
Inspection at port of entry.
Inspection at port of dispatch.
Field inspection during growing season.
Treatment as a condition of entry.
Post-entry growing and inspection.

Does This Mean That All Plant Materials are Contraband

No.

They could be imported following the procedure given subsequently in this book. However, depending on the perceived risk of introduction of dangerous pests into the country, the importation of some plants and plant products are either prohibited or restricted.

Prohibited Materials

Coconut, Tea, Rubber, Rice and Cacao- planting materials are some examples (refer to the Plant Protection Act).

These could only be imported in restricted amounts for research by the respective institutes.

Restricted Materials

These materials could be imported by fulfilling the prescribed requirements.

What is an Import Permit for Plants ?

The permit is a document that contains a statement of conditions that must be observed for the importation of plant materials allowed. The issue of the import permit depends upon the risks involved with respect to the plant materials imported and or the country of origin.

What is a Phytosanitary Certificate

It is a document, which states that the material is free from injurious pests and should conform to the plant import rules of the importing country. Phytosanitary certificate issued by any country should conform to the model appended to International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). It is issued only after thorough examination of the materials. If necessary, treatments are given so as to conform to the conditions imposed by the importing country. Issuance must be done within 14 days prior to shipment of the material.

Can the Materials Imported with an Import Permit and a Phytosanitary Certificate be Removed without Examination?

No.

Although the materials have been examined in the country of origin, there is a possibility of contamination by pests during transit. Hence all plant materials are subjected to quarantine examination at the port of entry. The plant materials may be retained for detailed examination, for treatment, destruction, or post-entry quarantine observation at the discretion of the plant quarantine officer.

What is the Purpose of Post-entry Quarantine

The main purpose of post-entry quarantine is to observe latent development of symptoms of pests, particularly diseases, for a period of time in a pest-proof house with close drainage and double entry doors.

What are the Plant Quarantine Treatments

Fumigation

Usually methyl bromide for fruits, vegetables, plants, nuts, railroad cars, ships, wood products, etc.

Phostoxin (Aluminium phosphoide) for storage grains

Hot water bath.

Dry heat.

Vapor heat

Cold treatment

Chemical dip.

Micronized dust

Who are the People who Keep Sri Lankan Crops Safe from Foreign Pests

On the front line are the Sri Lanka Plant Quarantine Officers trained in entomology, plant pathology, nematology and related disciplines.

National Programme Planners and International Donors provide managerial and technical support to line personnel who carry out the programmes with the assistance of administrative and clerical personnel.

To Obtain Relevant Information, Contact -

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