USDA QUARANTINE AND PRESHIPMENT USE OF METHYL BROMIDE

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The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) is charged with protecting American agriculture from invasive plant pests and diseases while facilitating international and interstate trade in agricultural products. In order to accomplish this mission, proactive work is taken to prevent plant pests from entering the United States through trade, and reactive work is taken when plant pests are detected within the country's borders. Methyl bromide fumigation is one of many safeguarding tools used by PPQ to exclude and eradicate plant pests. PPQ supervises all fumigations for imported goods, while the majority of United States export fumigations are supervised at a state, county, or local level. Fumigations are done as condition of entry/export or when a quarantine pest is detected.

Although such quarantine and pre-shipment (QPS) use of methyl bromide is exempt from the global phase-out of the fumigant per the Montreal Protocol, PPQ is committed to the development and validation of alternative treatments and techniques to reduce methyl bromide usage. But despite years of thorough research into alternatives by PPQ and its cooperators, methyl bromide continues to be the only feasible alternative for particular combinations of commodities and pests. Although a wide variety of commodities are treated, the majority of PPQ-supervised fumigations are for a handful of products, such as Chilean grapes, Peruvian asparagus, Italian tile, and exports of logs. PPQ continues to conduct research into alternatives, including heat, cold, and irradiation treatments and alternative fumigants such as sulfuryl fluoride. PPQ also continues to pursue and implement systems approaches with our trading partners, which include non-chemical activities to reduce the probability of unwanted pests on commodities, ultimately limiting the need for chemical treatments. PPQ is committed to implementing alternatives to methyl bromide that are technically and economically feasible and adequately control the targeted plant pests.