

United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Federal Agency Cooperation in World Trade Activities



While the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) plays a significant role in world trade, it is only one of many organizations that does so. APHIS works with other agencies both inside and outside of USDA on international trade issues, such as marketing, transportation, animal and plant health policy, food safety, and agricultural trade policy.

The Science and Technology Division of AMS provides centralized scientific support to AMS programs, including laboratory analyses, laboratory quality assurance, coordination of scientific research conducted by others for AMS, and statistical and mathematical consulting services. In addition, the Division's Plant Variety Protection unit issues certificates of protection for new varieties of sexually reproduced plants. The Division also collects and analyzes data about pesticide residue levels in agricultural commodities. The Division administers the Pesticide Recordkeeping Program, which requires all certified private applicators of federally restricted-use pesticides to maintain records of all applications. The records are put into a database to help analyze agricultural pesticide use.

The Agricultural Marketing Service

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) plays a large role in agriculture both at home and abroad. AMS includes six commodity divisions—Cotton, Dairy, Fruit and Vegetable, Livestock and Seed, Poultry, and Tobacco. The divisions employ specialists who provide standardization, grading, and market news services for those commodities. AMS enforces such Federal laws as the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act and the Federal Seed Act. AMS commodity divisions also oversee marketing agreements and orders, administer research and promotion programs, and purchase commodities for Federal food programs like the National School Lunch, Summer Camp, and School Breakfast Programs; the Nutrition Program for the Elderly; and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program.

The Transportation and Marketing Division brings together a unique combination of traffic managers, engineers, rural policy analysts, international trade specialists, and agricultural marketing specialists to help solve problems of U.S. and world agricultural transportation. This division works to ensure that there is an efficient transportation system for rural America that begins at the farm gate and moves agricultural and other rural products over the Nation's highways, railroads, airports, and waterways and into the domestic and international marketplace. The Division supplies research and technical information to producers, producer groups, shippers, exporters, rural communities, carriers, government agencies, and universities.

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The Foreign Agricultural Service

The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) is the “State Department” of the agriculture world. FAS maintains offices around the globe and has primary responsibility for these USDA overseas programs: market development, international trade agreement negotiations, and the collection of statistics and market information. FAS also administers USDA’s export credit guarantee and food aid programs and helps increase income and food availability in developing nations by mobilizing expertise for agriculturally led economic growth. FAS enhances U.S. agriculture’s competitiveness by providing linkages to world resources and international organizations and building a spirit of cooperation. FAS represents the world’s largest agricultural export country through its network of agricultural counselors, attachés, and trade officers stationed overseas and its analysts, marketing specialists, and negotiators located in Washington, DC.

The FAS attaché service has 105 professional agricultural economists and marketing specialists stationed in 64 posts covering 129 countries. Reports coming into Washington from these in-country experts are the basis for FAS world commodity market and trade information and publications. Attaché reports review changes in policies affecting U.S. agricultural exports, assess U.S. export marketing opportunities, monitor important weather-related developments, and respond to the daily informational needs of those who plan, initiate, monitor, and evaluate U.S. food and agricultural programs and policies.

In addition to data-gathering by attachés, FAS also maintains a worldwide agricultural information and reporting system through U.S. agricultural industries, remote sensing systems, and other sources. FAS uses this information to prepare production forecasts and assess export marketing opportunities, as well as to track changes in policies affecting U.S. agricultural exports and imports. Analyzing production and trade, personnel

in the Washington office prepare production forecasts and assess export marketing opportunities, as well as track changes in policies affecting U.S. agricultural exports and imports. These analyses are used by policy-makers, program administrators, producers, and exporters.

FAS programs help U.S. exporters develop and maintain markets overseas for hundreds of food and agricultural products ranging from bulk commodities to brand-name grocery items. Promotional activities are carried out chiefly in cooperation with nonprofit agricultural trade associations and cooperatives that agree to plan, manage, and contribute staff resources and funds to support these activities. The largest FAS promotional programs are the Foreign Market Development Cooperator Program and the Market Access Program.

Additionally, FAS sponsors U.S. participation in several major trade shows and a number of single-industry exhibitions overseas each year. Trade offices in 15 key market countries function as service centers for U.S. exporters and foreign buyers seeking market information. U.S. agricultural trade offices and attaché offices provide foreign buyers with up-to-the-minute communication with potential suppliers in the United States. FAS Trade Office personnel also assist U.S. exporters in launching products in overseas markets characterized by different food preferences, social customs, and marketing systems.

FAS coordinates and directs USDA’s responsibilities in international trade agreement programs and negotiations, working closely with the office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) in this effort. International trade policy experts within FAS help identify—and work to reduce—foreign trade barriers and practices that discourage the export of U.S. agricultural products. As the United States’ information clearinghouse for World Trade Organization (WTO) sanitary and phytosanitary issues and technical

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barriers to trade, FAS serves as the official conduit for notifications and comments about these measures. U.S. agricultural exports are subject to import duties and non-tariff trade restrictions. Trade information sent to Washington from FAS personnel overseas is used to map strategies for improving market access, pursuing U.S. rights under trade agreements, and developing programs and policies to make U.S. farm products more competitive.

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Food Safety and Inspection Service

While FAS works to ensure U.S. agricultural strength around the world, USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) works alongside APHIS and has the primary responsibility to keep America's domestic and imported meat and poultry free of disease. The USDA grading scale and stamp are marks of excellence worldwide.

FSIS is the public health agency in USDA, protecting consumers by ensuring that meat and poultry products are safe, wholesome, and accurately labeled. FSIS regulates meat and poultry products, which account for a third of consumer spending for food and carry an annual retail value of \$120 billion. FSIS regulates all raw beef, pork, lamb, chicken, and turkey, as well as approximately 250,000 different processed meat and poultry products, including hams, sausage, soups, stews, pizzas, and frozen dinners (any product that contains 2 percent or more cooked poultry or 3 percent or more raw meat). Consumers purchase these products packaged with 500,000 different USDA-approved labels.

Under the Federal Meat Inspection Act and the Poultry Products Inspection Act, FSIS inspects all meat and poultry sold in interstate and foreign commerce, including imported products. About 7,400 Federal inspectors oversee meat and poultry processing in some 6,200 plants. Inspectors check animals before and after slaughter, visually examining more than 6 billion poultry carcasses and 125 million livestock carcasses, including beef, pork, and lamb, each year. FSIS personnel prevent diseased animals from entering the food supply and examine carcasses for visible defects that can affect safety and quality. FSIS also inspects products during processing, handling, and packaging to ensure that they are safe and truthfully labeled.

FSIS sets standards for a range of activities associated with the production of meat and poultry products. For instance, the agency evaluates and sets standards for food ingredients, additives, and compounds used to prepare and package meat and poultry products. All plant facilities and equipment must adhere to FSIS standards and be approved before they can be used. The agency sets labeling standards and approves labels for meat and poultry products. FSIS also sets standards for certain slaughter and processing activities, such as plant sanitation and thermal processing.

FSIS develops and improves analytical procedures for detecting microbiological and chemical adulterants and infectious and toxic agents in meat and poultry products. The agency also develops new methods of inspection to better protect the public health, evaluating the effectiveness of its programs through systematic and special reviews. It responds to residue and other contamination incidents and, when appropriate, seeks voluntary recall of products by firms. FSIS and APHIS also work together on animal disease issues. APHIS often shares its expertise with FSIS on zoonotic and phytosanitary issues.

FSIS is pursuing a broad and long-term science-based strategy to improve the safety of meat and poultry products and to better protect public health. FSIS is undertaking a farm-to-table approach by improving the safety of meat and poultry at each step in the food production, processing, distribution, and marketing chain. These steps are designed to focus more attention on the risk of microbial contamination, the Nation's most significant food safety problem. The agency's goal is to reduce contamination as much as possible by setting public health-oriented standards for pathogenic microorganisms, building the principle of prevention into the production and inspection processes, and fostering the development and use of new technology.

In addition to a number of inplant improvements, FSIS is working closely with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to ensure food safety at the retail level and to establish Federal standards for the safe handling of food during transportation, distribution, and storage.

Food and Drug Administration

FDA, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is responsible for ensuring that foods are safe, wholesome, and sanitary. Products regulated by FDA that are made in other countries but sold here must meet the same standards as foods, drugs, cosmetics, and medical devices manufactured domestically.

The rapidly increasing activity of international and other organizations in developing product and process standards and the rise in number of imports of FDA-regulated products into the United States have helped to focus the agency's attention on its international role. FDA can better fulfill its mandate to protect and promote the public health by collaborating and cooperating with its foreign regulatory counterparts and international standards-setting organizations to

facilitate the compliance by imported products with FDA standards. Given the increase in imports, FDA is continually seeking ways to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of its international inspection, technical cooperation, and standardization efforts.

By clearly explaining to all nations and firms that import FDA-regulated products into the United States their requirements, FDA facilitates the importation of products that meet these requirements and discourages the admittance of those that do not. FDA helps foreign and domestic manufacturers understand how to comply with FDA's guidelines for Current Good Manufacturing Practice, Good Clinical Practice, and Good Laboratory Practice, and Procedures for the Safe and Sanitary Processing and Importing of Fish and Fishery Products, and other regulations.

International activities take place in virtually every part of the agency. Most FDA centers and offices have established contact points dedicated to enhancing FDA interactions with foreign governments, industry, and international organizations.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Another Federal agency that works with international trade issues, frequently in conjunction with APHIS, is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). FWS, which is a part of the U.S. Department of the Interior, is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages 520 National Wildlife Refuges on 93 million acres and thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. FWS also operates 66 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices, and 78 ecological services field stations.

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Among its key functions, the Service enforces Federal wildlife laws, protects endangered species, manages migratory birds, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their international conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to State fish and wildlife agencies.

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In enforcing the provisions of the 1975 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES), FWS works to protect threatened species from all international commercial trade and determine if species that are not threatened could become so if they continue to be unregulated. FWS also lists currently protected U.S. native species of animals and plants.

APHIS works closely with FWS on a number of issues. FWS coordinates with APHIS Animal Care on animal welfare issues, with Wildlife Services on issues involving migratory birds and threatened and endangered species, with Veterinary Services on smuggled birds and animal disease issues, and with PPQ on CITES-listed endangered plant species.

United States Trade Representative

Probably the best known Federal entity working on trade issues is the office of the USTR. It is responsible for developing and coordinating America's foreign trade, commodity, and direct investment policy.

The USTR provides trade policy leadership and negotiating expertise in several areas, including export expansion policy, industrial and services trade policy, international commodity agreements and policy, bilateral and multilateral trade and investment issues, trade-related intellectual property protection issues, import policy, trade, commodity, and direct investment matters dealt with by international institutions such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and all dealings with the WTO.

The issue of international trade is very large and very complicated. Federal offices work together with each other and, oftentimes, with State, local, and private interests to ensure that America continues to be an economic force in the world. There is no single office that handles all trade-related matters, even specialized trade such as agriculture. It takes a team of dedicated Federal agencies, of which APHIS is a part, to keep America competitive in the international trade arena.

For more information about APHIS programs, visit the APHIS homepage at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov>

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