



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

Plant Protection
and Quarantine

**MEXICAN AVOCADO OPERATIONAL PLAN
2003 - 2004 SHIPPING SEASON**

This plan outlines the steps necessary to import commercial shipments of Mexican Hass avocados into the United States. The avocados are grown in certified orchards located in approved Mexican municipalities and shipped to the United States from certified packing houses. Shipments may only be imported from October 15, 2003, to April 15, 2004. The avocados must have been grown in the Mexican state of Michoacan from the municipalities of Ario, Periban, Salvador Escalante, Nuevo Parangaricutiro (San Juan), Taretan, Tancitaro or Uruapan. (See Attachment #1). A list of the approved packing houses is located on Attachment #2.

The avocados may only be distributed in the following states: Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

The following Mexican border ports are approved for the entry of these avocados.

Arizona:

Nogales Contact: Eloy Cortez, SAQIO Telephone: (520) - 397 - 2073

Texas:

Brownsville Contact: James Epperson, SAQIO Telephone: (956) - 548 - 2543
Pharr Contact: Claudio García, SAQIO Telephone: (956) - 283 - 2160
Laredo Contact: Julio G. Vilá, SAQIO Telephone: (956) - 729 - 9911
Eagle Pass Contact: Mario Escobar, SAQIO Telephone: (830) - 758 - 5565
El Paso Contact: José Hinojos, SAQIO Telephone: (915) - 872 - 4720

CONTACTS FOR OPERATIONAL QUESTIONS:

Ross Nichols - National Avocado Program Coordinator
Telephone: (301) - 734 -5394 Fax: (301) - 734 -5269

Roeland J. Elliston - Western Region Avocado Program Coordinator
Telephone: (970)494-7 572 Fax: (970) 494-7501 Cellular: (970) 494-7572

Roger Holman - Eastern Region Avocado Program Coordinator
Telephone: (919) 716-5725 Fax: (919) 716-5672 Cellular: (919) 637-2211

Julio G. Vilá Mexican Border Avocado Program Coordinator
Telephone: (956) 729-9911 Fax: (956) 725-2575 Cellular: (956) 237-3761

MEXICO

Alberto Cisneros IS Avocado Program Coordinator, Uruapan, Michoacan, MX
Telephone: 011 - 52 - 452 - 527 - 1288

Yvette Pérez IS Area III Director, Guadalajara, Jalisco, MX
Telephone: 011- 52 - 333 - 641 - 8310

ADVANCED NOTIFICATION:

The office of International Services in Uruapan, Mexico, will provide advanced notification of each shipment of avocados, to the ports of entry, through the electronic avocado shipment tracking report. A record will be created in the electronic tracking report upon the departure of each shipment from Michoacan. The ports of entry will be able to query the number of shipments approaching their locations in order to estimate the workload.

DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED:

Notice of Arrival - The importer must provide a Notice of Arrival to the AQI office at the port of entry prior to arrival. The notice must include the final destination and whether transloading is necessary. (Attachment #3).

Specific Avocado Import Permit - The importer must obtain a permit outlining instructions required to maintain compliance with the regulations. The permit will list specific requirements pertaining to distribution and breaking of seals by PPQ at the in-bond destination. The permit will be valid for one shipping season. (Attachment #4). An updated list of permittees can be obtained through the Permit Unit's web site Plant/Plants Products on web/01.

Mexican Phytosanitary Certificate - Each shipment will be accompanied by a Mexican phytosanitary certificate with an additional declaration stating that all the conditions of 7CFR 319.56-2ff have been met. (Attachment #5).

INSPECTION PROCEDURES:

At the Port of Entry:

1. Verify the seal: Shipments must arrive in a sealed refrigerated container secured by Sanidad Vegetal. Verify that the shipment is intact: if the seal is broken, check documentation for notation from the Mexican official having broken the seal. If so annotated, continue with the inspection. (Attachment #6).

If the seal is broken, no official notation exists, and boxes are found separated from the pallets, HOLD the shipment and contact your supervisor or the field coordinator. The integrity of the shipment needs to be verified. It would be advisable to unload the commodity and inspect for the presence of non-program fruit. If non-program fruit is present the load is to be rejected.

2. Verify documentation: Confirm the presence of the Mexican phytosanitary certificate and validate the information it contains.

3. Verify the final destination and labeling: The destination must be one of the approved States or the District of Columbia as specified previously. The avocados must be packed in boxes that are clearly marked with the identity of the grower, packing house, and exporter, and with the following statement “Not for distribution in: AL, AK, AR, AZ, CA, FL, GA, HI, LA, MS, NV, NM, NC, OK, OR, SC, TN, TX, WA, PUERTO RICO AND ALL OTHER US TERRITORIES.” Stick-on labeling or permanent label on the boxes will be allowed for the season. (Attachment #7). Each avocado must be labeled with a sticker that bears the Sanidad Vegetal registration number of the packing house. (Attachment #8).

4. Fruit cutting and inspection: APHIS International Services in Mexico will randomly select a representative sample of 30 fruits from each shipment, at the originating packing shed. These fruits will be individually identified by lot and packing shed, placed inside a green mesh bag, sealed, and located in the rear of the container. In the event that the sample selected by APHIS International Services has been tampered , an additional 30 fruits should be randomly selected. All 30 fruits must be cut and inspected for pests. The pests of concern highlighted in the regulation are the large avocado seed weevil (*Helipus lauri*), the avocado seed moth (*Stenomoma catenifer*), the small avocado seed weevils (*Conotrachelus aguacate* and *C. perseae*), the avocado stem weevil (*Copturus aguacate*), and *Anastrepha* spp. (Attachment #9).

- Examine the stem end of the fruit for ovoposition/infestation sites created by the stem weevil.
- Thinly slice the fruit across the stem end inspecting for this pest.
- After inspection for the stem weevil, slice the remainder of the fruit to look for fruit flies.
- Examine the seed for signs of seed weevil damage.

If pests of concern listed above are found, contact your supervisor and the PPQ/AQI field coordinators. If other pests of quarantine significance are found, follow standard operating procedures. If no quarantine significant pest is found, allow the shipment to proceed.

Transloading:

It may be necessary to transfer an avocado shipment from a Mexican truck to a US truck at the port of entry. All shipments must be transloaded into refrigerated trucks. One transloading is allowed under the supervision of an AQI officer. The officer will remain for the duration of the transloading. When the transloading is complete, the AQI officer will affix an APHIS seal to the container.

Coordination with AMS:

The Fruit and Vegetable Division of the Agricultural Marketing Services (AMS) will be responsible for grading the avocados when they arrive at the border or at destination. (Attachment #10). If the fruit is graded at the border, it must be done under AQI supervision. If AMS draws samples at the border, once the sampling is complete the avocados must be either returned to AQI for destruction or placed in the truck traveling north. Avocados are prohibited in Texas and Arizona.

It is recommended that AMS and AQI coordinate inspections if the grading is done at the border. If the avocados do not make the grade at the border, they can not be reconditioned in Texas, only in the approved states.

Transit:

All shipments must move IT (in transit) under a US Customs bond to the approved destination state. A consumption entry is not acceptable. The approved transiting area should be specified on the transit documents, US Customs 7512, by the importer's agent preparing them. IT should read as follows "The transit corridor is that area of the United States bounded on the west by following Interstate 10 North from El Paso, TX, to Las Cruces NM, and north following Interstate 25 to Colorado border, then west along Colorado and Utah's southern borders, then north along Utah's western border, then west along Idaho's southern border and north along Idaho's western border to the border with Canada. On the east and south by a line extending from Brownsville, TX, to Kinder, LA, to Memphis, TN, following Interstate 40 to Raleigh, NC, and due east from Raleigh. Avocados that enter the United States at Nogales, AZ, must be moved to Las Cruces, NM, by Interstate 10 and then must remain within the shipping area described above in this paragraph." *In addition, the shipments are not allowed to change the destination once they are in transit, if they do, this is in violation of the Import Permit. A diversion will be allowed only on cases of emergency and with the prior approval of PPQ or AQI.*

1. Stamp the IT paperwork, US Customs 7512, "Caution. Shipment Authorized to ..." include the name and address of the consignee. (Attachment #12).

2. The Notice of Arrival (PPQ form 368) will be stamped with a "Caution. Shipment Authorized to...", and allow seven days for the commodity to transit. Give the driver the consignee's copy, and attach a copy to a box on the last pallet in the container for PPQ at destination. Keep a copy for your records. (Attachment #11).

3. In order to assure compliance from the carriers, please provide them an instructions package that should contain copies of the following documents

- Transit Map (Attachment 12)
- Safeguard Notice (Attachment 13)
- SPHD's list (Attachment 14)
- Instructions for the truck drivers (Attachment 15)

4. As soon as the shipment is released, the ports of entry will be faxing, to the SPHD or designee at destination, a revised Notice of Arrival specifically designed for the IT Mexican avocados for limited distribution. All ports will maintain a file with legible copies of all transactional IT Mexican avocados paperwork.

5. Finally, proceed to update the electronic avocado shipment tracking report with the inspection results. (See attachment 18) The electronic avocado tracking report should be updated as soon as possible. This will keep the destination ports informed of the shipments transiting in their direction. In addition, the information is used to generate weekly reports, Sunday through Saturday, early Monday mornings.

INSPECTION PROCEDURES:

At the destination in the approved States:

1. A USDA officer must meet the shipment at destination to verify the integrity of the APHIS seal. PPQ at destination may communicate with the local AMS office and coordinate if and when grading will be done. If AMS plans to grade the shipment at destination, AMS may verify and break the APHIS seal. Ask the local AMS office to contact PPQ if the avocados do not meet the grade requirements and need to be exported. PPQ must ensure the avocados are safeguarded to prevent distribution outside the approved states. Reconditioning is allowed in the approved states. Arrangements can be made with other law enforcement or regulatory officials to verify and break the seals. The Port Director should obtain approval from their Regional Coordinators if alternate arrangements are made.

If the APHIS seal has been broken in transit, verify the presence of a Safeguard Notice that may accompany the transit documents (Attachment 13). It will provide information as to who and why was the seal broken. In no Safeguard Notice exists, and boxes are found separated from the pallets, HOLD the shipment and contact your supervisor or the field coordinator. The integrity of the shipment needs to be verified. It would be advisable to unload the commodity and inspect for the presence of non-program fruit, and or the absence of program fruit. If non-program fruit is present the load is to be rejected. If program fruit is absent, (remember that there is sampling by AQI and maybe AMS at the POEs), collect all pertinent information, copies of documents and obtain a statement from the driver, in case an investigation is initiated.

2. PPQ officers should periodically visit the importer/consignee at the destination several days after arrival of a shipment of avocados. Verify the distribution of the shipment to ensure distribution is within the approved states. A compliance agreement should be used to confirm the requirements of the regulation are being met (Attachment 17). The local PPQ compliance officer can provide guidance.

VIOLATIONS

Any violations to the protocol of the program should be documented and forwarded to IES for investigation as quickly as possible, including Official Warnings. Even though IES may not initiate an

investigation on an Official Warning, the information related to the incident will be collected in a database for further reference on repeated offenses. IES contacts can be found on Attachment 19.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information regarding the avocado program can be obtained at the following sites:

Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance web site

[Http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/avocados/](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/avocados/)