

**Voluntary Report** – Voluntary - Public Distribution

**Date:** May 26,2020

**Report Number:** JA2020-0111

**Report Name:** Japan Temporarily Accepts Electronic Copies of Phytosanitary Certificates for Horticultural Imports

**Country:** Japan

**Post:** Tokyo

**Report Category:** Exporter Guide, Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards - Certification, Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety, WTO Notifications

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**Report Highlights:**

On April 23, 2020, in response to COVID-19 air travel disruptions, Japan notified the World Trade Organization via G/SPS/N/JPN/755 that Japan would temporarily accept electronic copies of phytosanitary certificates to clear import quarantine requirements. This action affects imports of horticultural products, such as vegetables, fruits and nuts. The criteria for lifting the temporary measure have not been released. For electronic certificate requirements for animal product imports, see JA2020-0089.

## Background

The [Plant Protection Act of Japan<sup>1</sup>](#) stipulates quarantine controls on imported products to prevent entry and spread of pests and diseases to plants in Japan. Based on this Act, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), the competent authority for plant and animal quarantine in Japan, releases the [Ordinance for Enforcement of the Plant Protection Act](#) (available in Japanese only), which details Japan's phytosanitary requirements (see Appendix 1 for further information).

Under Article 6 of the Plant Protection Act, imported plants and plant products, except for those listed in Article 5-3 (excerpted in Appendix 2) must be accompanied by phytosanitary certificates (PC) issued by exporting country's governmental organization. The USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is the National Plant Protection Organization for the United States.

It is a common trade practice for consignments shipped by sea that exporters send original PCs by air to importers. In light of COVID-19-related travel restrictions and reduction in international passenger and cargo flights, industry sources expressed concerns about the possibility of PCs not reaching importers by the time of consignments' arrival. Such a delay would hinder a timely import quarantine clearance process and importers would incur additional storage costs.

As a mitigation measure for this extraordinary situation, MAFF decided to temporarily accept electronic copies of PCs to meet Japan's plant quarantine requirements and facilitate import clearance. On April 23, 2020, Japan notified the measure to the World Trade Organization (WTO) under [G/SPS/N/JPN/755](#) (see [JA2020-0089](#)). MAFF enacted the measure retroactively on April 21, 2020.

## Import Procedures under Temporary Electronic Certificate Measure<sup>2</sup>

When APHIS issues an original PC, it shares an electronic copy of the PC with MAFF.

Scenario 1: Importers of U.S. plant exports in Japan have a copy of the PC

- 1) Importer provides a printed copy of PC to a MAFF quarantine officer at a port, where consignment arrives.
- 2) MAFF quarantine officer verifies the authenticity of the printed copy of the PC with APHIS.
- 3) Once APHIS confirms authenticity of the contents of the PC copy, MAFF quarantine officer proceeds with import inspection.
- 4) The importer provides the original PC to the MAFF quarantine officer when available.

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<sup>1</sup> Japan's Plant Protection Act and the Ordinance for Enforcement of the Plant Protection Act will be revised on November 11, 2020 (see [JA2020-0033](#) and [JA2020-0103](#)).

<sup>2</sup> [Annex 1 of the WTO notification \(G/SPS/N/JPN/755\)](#)

Scenario 2: Importers in Japan do NOT have a photocopy of the PC

- 1) MAFF recognizes electronic PCs sent by APHIS as official.
- 2) Importer requests that MAFF quarantine officer at port, where consignment arrives, use the electronic copy of the PC sent by APHIS to complete the import quarantine requirements.
- 3) Importer provides the original PC to MAFF quarantine officer when the PC arrives to Japan.

No additional delays are expected during MAFF's import clearance under Scenario 2, as compared to Scenario 1.

**Attachments:**

No Attachments.

## Appendix 1. MAFF's "Ordinance for Enforcement of the Plant Protection Act"

- "Quarantine Pest List"
  - [Before November 10, 2020](#)
  - [After November 11, 2020](#)
- "List of the Plants Subject to Field Inspection in Exporting Countries and the Details of Requirements for Each of the Quarantine Pests"
  - [Before November 10, 2020](#)
  - [After November 11, 2020](#)
- "List of the Import Prohibited Plants"
  - [Before November 10, 2020](#)
  - [After November 11, 2020](#)
- "List of the Plants Subject to Specific Phytosanitary Measures to be Carried Out in Exporting Countries and the Details of Requirements for each of the Quarantine Pests"
  - [Before November 10, 2020](#)
  - [After November 11, 2020](#)

**Appendix 2.** Items exempted from PC requirement under Article 5-3 of the “Ordinance for Enforcement of the Plant Protection Act”

**Current (as of May 21, 2020)**

- 1) Dried plants of turmeric and the genera *Eucommia*
- 2) Dried seeds of almond, cashew, coconut, pepper, pistachio, Persian walnut, and macadamia nut

**Revised list notified to the WTO (see [JA2019-0193](#))**

(Date of implementation is to be determine)

1. Dried and compressed plants
2. Dried and chopped plants (excluding Senna stem (*Cassia acutifolia*), orange fruits and peels (*Citrus sinensis*) and cassava roots (*Manihot esculenta*))
3. Dried and crushed or smashed plants (excluding orange and tamarind fruits (*Tamarindus indica*) and cassava roots)
4. Dried plants that are not compressed, chopped, crushed or smashed
5. Frozen plants (excluding shelled walnut)

However, imports of the following species and plant parts require a PC notwithstanding the revised list:

<i>Pinus pinea</i>	Leaf, branch and bark
<i>Eucalyptus stuartiana</i>	Leaf, branch, flower and fruit
<i>Eucalyptus viminalis</i>	Leaf, branch, flower and fruit
Egoma ( <i>Perilla ocymoides</i> )	Seed
Cacao ( <i>Theobroma cacao</i> )	Seed
<i>Castanea crenata</i>	Chestnut (excluding peeled chestnut)
Bubinga ( <i>Guibourtia pellegriniana</i> )	Bark
Walnut ( <i>Juglans sp.</i> )	Shelled walnut
Coriander ( <i>Coriandrum sativum</i> )	Leaf and seed
Peruvian pepper ( <i>Schinus molle</i> )	Leaf, branch, flower and fruit
Sesame ( <i>Sesamum indicum</i> )	Seed
Pomegranate ( <i>Punica granatum</i> )	Fruit
Sugar pine ( <i>Pinus lambertiana</i> )	Leaf, branch and bark
<i>Cryptomeria japonica</i>	Fruit
Rapeseed ( <i>Brassica napus ssp. Oleifera</i> )	Seed
Senna ( <i>Cassia acutifolia</i> )	Leaf
Tamarind ( <i>Tamarindus indica</i> )	Fruit
<i>Castanea mollissima</i>	Chestnut (excluding peeled chestnut)
<i>Jatropha curcas</i>	Seed
Black cumin ( <i>Nigella sativa</i> )	Seed
<i>Cyperus rotundus</i>	Leaf and stem
<i>Pinus maritima</i>	Leaf, branch and bark
Caraway ( <i>Carum carvi</i> )	Seed

Brazil nut tree ( <i>Bertholletia excelsa</i> )	Nut (excluding peeled nut)
<i>Carthamus tinctorius</i>	Flower and seed
<i>Ocimum basilicum</i>	Leaf and seed
<i>Terminalia catappa</i>	Leaf, branch and flower
<i>Juniperus communis</i>	Fruit
Common beech ( <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> )	Leaf, branch and flower
Horse radish tree ( <i>Moringa oleifera</i> )	Leaf and fruit
Chenopodiaceae	Seed
Gramineae	Seed (excluding malt)
Polygonaceae	Seed
Amaranthaceae	Seed
Leguminosae	Seed