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DEPARTMENT CIRCULAR

No. 15

Series of 2025

SUBJECT: GUIDELINES GOVERNING THE PHYTOSANITARY REQUIREMENTS FOR INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT OF SEEDS FOR PLANTING AND RESEARCH PURPOSES

WHEREAS, seeds are moved internationally for various reasons such as food, feed, forage, ornamental, pharmacological, biofuel, fiber, forestry, and pre-commercial purposes, breeding, seed multiplication and for other research purposes;

WHEREAS, many important regulated pests are seed-borne or seed-transmissible; hence, movement of possible infested seeds into a country may pose risk for entry, establishment, and spread of these pests;

WHEREAS, there are also common practices that are causing phytosanitary issues such as mixing, blending, re-exporting to numerous destinations etc. resulting in confusion on the true origin of seeds and changes in its phytosanitary status;

WHEREAS, there is a need to apply phytosanitary measures to international seed movement to manage the risk of entry, establishment and spread of regulated pests;

WHEREAS, the phytosanitary measures should be appropriate and proportional to the risk identified through Pest Risk Analysis (PRA);

WHEREAS, the Philippines is a contracting party to the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), an intergovernmental treaty that aims to secure coordinated, effective action and control the introduction and spread of plant pest and diseases, and under which National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs) are mandated to regulate phytosanitary measures in accordance with international standards;

WHEREAS, in April 2017, the IPPC approved the International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures ISPM No. 38 *International Movement of Seeds* providing technical direction to assist NPPOs on identifying, assessing and managing the pest risk associated with the international movement of seeds; and provides procedures to establish phytosanitary import, export and re-export requirements to include seed inspection, sampling, testing, treatment and other phytosanitary measures;

WHEREAS, the Philippines recognizes the need to translate ISPM 38 into a national law to harmonize approaches in managing risks associated with international seed movement;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, FRANCISCO P. TIU LAUREL JR., Secretary, pursuant to Section 17 of PD 1433 also known as *Plant Quarantine Law of 1978*, as amended; other pertinent laws, orders, rules and regulations and relevant international agreements to which the Philippines is a signatory, this circular governing the international movement of seeds for planting and research purposes, is hereby promulgated.

ARTICLE I GENERAL PROVISIONS

SECTION 1. Objective. This Circular aims to rationalize and harmonize the phytosanitary requirements based on intended purpose and pest risk of seeds for international movement, and correspondingly improve the national capacity.

SECTION 2. Definition of Terms.

2.1. Contaminating pests – A pest that is carried by a surface-contaminated commodity, and in case of plants and plant products, does not infest those plants or plant products.

2.2. Designated Port of Entry - a port open to both foreign and domestic trade. The term includes principal ports of entry and subports of entry.

2.3. Exporting Country - the country from which a commodity, product, or service is shipped or sent out to another country for trade.

2.4. Genetically Modified Organism Declaration - a document stating that a commodity is a “living modified organism” as defined under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety referring to any living organism that possesses a novel combination of genetic material obtained through the use of modern biotechnology.

2.5. Grain – A commodity class for seeds intended for processing or consumption but not for planting (ISPM 5).

2.6. Importing Country - the country that receives commodities, products, or services from another country through trade.

2.7. International Movement – import or export of seeds or re-export of seeds

2.8. Pathway - Any means that allows the entry or spread of a pest (ISPM 5).

2.9. Pest Risk Analysis - the process of evaluating biological or other scientific and economic evidence to determine whether an organism is a pest, where it should be regulated, and the strength of any phytosanitary measures to be taken against it.

2.10. Phytosanitary Certificate - an official paper document or its official electronic equivalent, consistent with the model certificates of the IPPC, attesting that a consignment meets phytosanitary import requirements.

2.11. Place/ Country of Origin - country where the plants were grown or where the plants from which the plant products are derived were grown, or where the regulated articles were first exposed to contamination by pests.

2.12. Practically free (of a consignment, field, or place of production) - Without pests (or a specific pest) in numbers or quantities in excess of those that can be expected to result from, and be consistent with, good cultural and handling practices employed in the production and marketing of the commodity

2.13. Plant Quarantine Clearance - an import document issued by the NPPO of the importing country for first-time importers intending to conduct a one-time importation. Such importation is strictly for personal consumption, research, or other non-commercial purposes.

2.14. Re-Export/ Re-exported consignment - Consignment that has been imported into a country from which it is then exported. The consignment may be stored, split up, combined with other consignments or have its packaging changed.

2.15. Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearance - document issued prior to importation by the BPI to ensure that the products being imported meet standards to protect human, animal, or plant life or health, ensuring that the products are safe for consumers and to prevent the spread of pests or diseases among animals or plants. Such document also prescribes the conditions to be complied with by the importer for the maintenance of quality and suitability of the product for the intended purposes.

2.16. Seeds - A commodity class for seeds for planting or intended for planting and not for consumption or processing (ISPM 5)

2.17. Seed-borne pests - pests carried by seeds externally or internally that may or may not be transmitted to plants growing from these seeds and cause their infestation.

2.18. Seed Transmitted pests - a seed-borne pest that is transmitted via seeds directly to plants growing from these seeds and causes their infestation.

ARTICLE II RATIONALE AND COVERAGE

SECTION 3. Rationale. This Circular shall provide a basis for BPI in determining phytosanitary requirements for seeds moved internationally based on intended purpose and the pest risk.

SECTION 4. Coverage. This Circular covers only seeds intended for planting (including product development, demonstration, for seed health, among others), laboratory analysis, destruction sampling, and greenhouse trial and does not apply to grain or vegetative parts (e.g. tubers), and seeds imported for consumption and processing.

ARTICLE III CATEGORIZATION OF COMMODITIES

SECTION 5. Categorization of Commodities. This Circular adopts the categorization of commodities according to level of pest risk pursuant to DA Quarantine Administrative Circular No. 1, Series of 2014 *Guidelines for Categorization of Commodities of Plant Origin* where seeds are categorized under Category IV which will require Pest Risk Analysis (PRA).

ARTICLE IV GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR IMPORTATION

SECTION 6. Pest Risk Analysis. PRA shall be conducted in accordance with the existing NPQSD PRA Manual guided by ISPM 2 (Framework for pest risk analysis), ISPM 11 (Pest risk analysis for quarantine pests) and ISPM 21 (Pest risk analysis for regulated non-quarantine pests). The determined phytosanitary measures shall be rational and proportional to the identified, assessed and managed risks.

6.1. Seeds as pests. PRA for seeds as pests should follow the guidance provided in Annex 4 of ISPM 11.

6.2. Seeds as pathways

- Seed-borne pests include:
 - seed-transmitted pests that are carried by the seed internally or externally and directly infest the host plant growing from the seed (category 1(a))
 - non-seed-transmitted pests that are carried by the seed internally or externally and are transferred to the environment (e.g. water, soil) and then infest a host plant under natural conditions (category 1(b))
 - pests carried by the seed, internally or externally, that do not transfer to a host
 - plant under natural conditions (category 1(c)).

- Contaminating pests may be relevant even though they are not seed-borne (category 2).

Pests in categories 1(a), 1(b) and 2 should be further assessed for establishment, spread and economic impacts. Pests in category 1(c) cannot establish because they are not transferred to a suitable host.

6.3 Mixing, Blending, and Bulking. In assessing the pest risk of mixed, blended or bulked seeds, all combinations of pests, hosts and origins should be considered. The impacts of the mixing, blending or bulking processes (e.g., dilution, increased handling) should also be considered in determining the overall pest risk of mixtures, blends and bulk lots of seeds. Testing and inspection may be done either on the components or on the mixture or the blend to be certified. All components of the mixture, blend or bulk lot should be traceable. This information must be provided by the exporting country.

6.4 Pest Management in Seed production at Origin. Certain practices used in seed production may alone or in combination be sufficient to meet phytosanitary import requirements. Full documentation of phytosanitary measures applied to the seeds during pre-planting, pre- and post-harvest, including seed certification schemes, use of resistant varieties and seed treatments, should be maintained to facilitate traceability, as appropriate. This information must be provided by the exporting country.

SECTION 7. Intended Purpose. The PRA shall take into account the intended purpose of the importation, namely: laboratory testing or destructive analysis, planting under restricted conditions or planting under field conditions.

ARTICLE V SPECIFIC PHYTOSANITARY REQUIREMENTS

SECTION 8. Requirements for Seeds Intended for Laboratory Testing or Destructive Analysis. Such seeds are not intended for planting or for release into the environment, hence; PRA is not necessary.

1. Prior to importation, a Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearance (SPSIC) or Plant Quarantine Clearance (PQC) must be secured by the importer from BPI. Requirements shall include:
 - BPI-Approved laboratory (See Annex A)
 - Research outline
 - Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) declaration (if applicable)
2. A Phytosanitary Certificate (PC), stating the SPSIC number and its purpose is required from country of origin

3. The importer shall ensure that the seeds are selected from practically free of weed seeds, soil and other prohibited matters, securely packed and sent through the designated port(s) of entry;
4. The quality testing of the imported seeds shall be strictly conducted under contained laboratory conditions.
5. The BPI personnel shall have access to the laboratory facilities to monitor ongoing activities and shall be provided with appropriate documentation/reports, if requested.
6. The remnant seeds including the imported packaging materials shall be destroyed upon conclusion of the testing by appropriate means under the supervision of BPI (Disposal plan);
7. All activities of the approved laboratory shall be coordinated with the BPI including the disposal.

SECTION 9. Requirements for seeds for planting under restricted conditions. Such seeds are imported for research (evaluation, germplasm and breeding) and grown in growth chambers, greenhouses/glasshouses or eventually for planting to designated post entry quarantine areas. PRA is necessary.

1. Prior to importation, the importer shall secure an SPSIC/PQC from BPI. Requirements shall include:
 - BPI Approved greenhouse/post entry quarantine site (See Annex B)
 - Detailed Research outline including experimental design (volume of seeds to be imported must be specified)
 - Sketch map of Final destination and/or post entry quarantine site
 - GMO declaration (if applicable)
2. A Phytosanitary Certificate (PC) stating the SPSIC number and its purpose is required from the country of origin. Depending on the result of PRA, a certification stating that it is free from identified regulated pests and/or treatment may be required and details of this must be stated in the accompanying PC.
3. The importer may establish a seed health testing facility/laboratory, which under the supervision of BPI, shall conduct inspection, seed pathological analyses, treatments, if necessary and appropriate disposal measures.
 - The importer shall provide greenhouse/post entry quarantine sites for initial planting of incoming seeds, which should be surrounded with appropriate buffer vegetation consisting of non-host plants to serve as botanical pest repellents. These sites shall be approved by BPI.
 - The importer shall guarantee BPI access to the laboratory and/or greenhouse/post entry quarantine sites, to monitor on- going activities and shall be provided with appropriate documentation, if requested.
 - Field release for initial planting and subsequent planting in the post entry quarantine site shall only be made upon the consent of the BPI.

4. Importers may apply for approval of its own laboratory (Annex A) or may avail the services of BPI approved third party laboratories for seed health testing.
5. Upon arrival, the seeds must be surrendered to the BPI PQ Officer at the port of entry for inspection and sampling. Laboratory testing at the port of entry or in a BPI-approved laboratory, will be conducted and seeds shall only be released after it has been proven negative to the regulated pests.
6. Should there be incidence of regulated and quarantine pests, appropriate phytosanitary measures will be applied.
7. Reports of monitoring including laboratory analysis should be submitted to BPI which shall serve as the basis if it can proceed with planting under field conditions.
8. All activities of the approved laboratory and/or greenhouse/post entry quarantine site shall be coordinated with the BPI including the disposal.

SECTION. 10 Requirement for seeds for planting under field conditions. Seeds intended for unrestricted release may present the highest pest risk for quarantine pests; hence, PRA is necessary.

1. Only importers who have fulfilled the requirements under Section 9 are eligible to apply for importation for field planting.
2. Importers should be registered to BPI as required by Article 3 of DA Department Circular no. 4 series of 2016.
3. Prior to importation, the importer shall secure an SPSIC from BPI. Requirements shall include:
 - Approved planting areas (Final destination)
 - GMO declaration (if applicable),
4. A PC stating the SPSIC number and its purpose is required from country of origin. Depending on the result of PRA, Certification free from identified regulated pests, storage insect pests, weeds seeds including soil impurities and/or treatment (fungicide/insecticide application or fumigation) may be required and details of this must be stated in the accompanying PC.
5. Upon arrival, the seeds must be subjected to inspection and sampling by the BPI PQ Officer at the port of entry. Laboratory testing at the port of entry or in BPI approved laboratory will be conducted.
6. Detection of regulated pests shall result to the application of the sanctions and penalties provided under DC 4.

SECTION 11. Requirements for imported GMO seeds. Imported GMO seeds shall comply with the provisions of DOST-DA-DENR-DOH-DILG Joint Department Circular No. 1, Series of 2021, and other subsequent laws related to the importation of GMO seeds.

SECTION 12 Pre-Shipment Conditions in the SPSIC/PQC. Imported seeds may have the following pre-shipment conditions:

- The Phytosanitary Certificate accompanying the consignment must certify that a representative sample of the consignment has been inspected in accordance with NPPO's official procedures by visual inspection and appropriate detection

methods (where applicable) and found to be free from any insect pests, weed seeds and other regulated articles.

- The following additional declaration(s) must be included in the Phytosanitary Certificate:

The seeds in this consignment have been either:

- sourced from a 'pest free area' free from [quarantine pest of concern];
 - sourced from a 'pest free place of production' free from [quarantine pest of concern];
 - a representative sample has been tested and found free from [quarantine pest of concern].
- Seed treatment
 - Specific requirements on packaging

SECTION 13. Must Ship Out Date for Seeds for Planting and Research Purposes. Due to the special nature of seeds which need more time to do the necessary testing, packing and shipping, the 'Must Ship Out' period will be 180 days upon issuance of SPSIC/PQC.

SECTION 14. Equivalence of Phytosanitary Measures

Determination of the equivalence of phytosanitary measures may be initiated by the exporting country making a request for equivalence to the Philippines as described in ISPM 24 (Guidelines for the determination and recognition of equivalence of phytosanitary measures). It may also be initiated by the Philippines. NPPOs are encouraged to provide multiple options when setting phytosanitary import requirements, provided that the measures are technically feasible and reduce the assessed pest risk to an acceptable level.

ARTICLE VI

PHYTOSANITARY CERTIFICATION FOR EXPORT AND RE-EXPORT

SECTION 15. Phytosanitary Certification for Export

1. *Filing of Application.* The Applicant shall file Application for Inspection and Phytosanitary Certification accomplished form (BPI Q Form No. 10) to the nearest NPQSD Station, at least forty-eight (48) hours prior to scheduled packing or treatment. The applicant should provide the following information:

- a. Date of application
- b. Name of Exporter, address and contact number
- c. Commodity Common Name
- d. Commodity Scientific Name
- e. Quantity of seeds
- f. Description and number of Packages
- g. Origin/source of commodity
- h. Name and Address of Consignee
- i. Date, place and time of inspection desired
- j. Port of Entry



- k. Means of Conveyance
- l. Flight or Voyage number
- m. Departure date
- n. Import Permit/For Treatment/For Laboratory/other declarations

2. *Review of Application.* The NPQSD Station's receiving officer will review the information provided and verify if the commodity is prohibited or not in the destination, and verify the phytosanitary requirements being imposed by the importing country. Other requirements may also be requested from the exporter such as: Import Permit from importing country and other commercial documents e.g. NSIC Resolution on the List of Restricted Varieties, (DA Department Circular No. 17, Series of 2020 under Section 11, RA 7308, CITES) Export Declaration, Packing List, Commercial Invoice.

3. *Actual inspection of the commodity.* Receiving officer will assign a PQ inspector to conduct actual inspection. Inspection and procedures are based on ISPM 31 or specific inspection protocols under bilateral agreements with other countries.

- If treatment is required, PQ inspector will supervise the treatment to ensure efficacy of the treatment. Treatment procedure is based on or should follow existing international protocols/guidelines. The BPI-accredited treatment provider will then issue a treatment certificate, as basis for the issuance of PC. (pursuant to BPI QAO No. 1, Series of 2010)
- Commodities may also be subjected to specific laboratory analysis as required by the importing country. Duration of the analysis may vary depending on the pest which has to be identified. Pest detection report form will be issued.

4. *Printing and signing of the Phytosanitary Certificate.* Guidelines for completing sections of a Phytosanitary Certificate for export is provided for by International Standard for Phytosanitary Measure (ISPM) no. 12. Phytosanitary certificates can be in paper form or, where it is accepted by the NPPO of the importing country, in electronic form (ePhyto). Phytosanitary certificates are not valid until all requirements have been met and they are dated, signed and stamped or completed electronically by BPI.

5. *Payment of regulatory fees.* Schedule of regulatory fees is based on the DA Administrative Circular No. 8 series of 2016.

6. *Release of the Phytosanitary Certificate*

- *Mode of Transmission.* Phytosanitary certificates should accompany the consignments for which they have been issued. Phytosanitary certificates may also be transmitted separately by mail or other means if accepted by the NPPO of the importing country. In the case of electronic phytosanitary certificates, they should be directly available to the relevant NPPO officials. In all cases, phytosanitary certificates should be available to the NPPO of the importing country upon the consignment's arrival.

SECTION 16. Phytosanitary Certification for Re-Export.

BPI has two options regarding inspection/treatment/ analysis of the consignment for re-export:

- If the phytosanitary import requirements are the same or less stringent, the NPPO of the re-exporting country may not need to undertake an additional inspection /treatment/analysis.
- If the phytosanitary import requirements are different or more stringent, the NPPO of the re-exporting country may undertake an additional inspection/treatment/analysis to ensure that the consignment conforms to the phytosanitary requirements of the importing country.

Additional declarations on phytosanitary certificates for re-export, where required, should be based on the activities of the NPPO of the country of re-export.

The original phytosanitary certificate or its certified copy should accompany the consignment together with the phytosanitary certificate for re-export. If the consignment is split up and the resulting consignments are re-exported separately, then phytosanitary certificates for re-export and certified copies of the phytosanitary certificate from the country of export will be required to accompany all such consignments. The phytosanitary certificate for re-export shall be signed only after it is duly completed.

SECTION 17. Export Restrictions. Seeds classified by the National Seed Industry Council (NSIC) as traditional varieties, rare species, lines, or strains are subject to export restrictions under Section 15(b) of Republic Act No. 7308, also known as the Seed Industry Development Act of 1992, and the guidelines in Department of Agriculture (DA) Circular No. 17, Series of 2020, and other subsequent laws related to export restrictions on seeds.

ARTICLE VII NON-EXCLUSIVITY

SECTION 18. Non-exclusivity. All existing rules and regulations, policies, procedures and standards consistent with this Circular shall continue to be in force and effect.

ARTICLE VIII REPEALING CLAUSE

SECTION 19. Repealing Clause. All existing Orders and Issuances inconsistent herewith are hereby revoked, repealed and/or modified accordingly.

ARTICLE IX SEPARABILITY CLAUSE

SECTION 20. Separability Clause. If any portion of this Circular is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other portions thereof which are not affected shall continue to be in full force and effect.

ARTICLE X
EFFECTIVITY

SECTION 21. Effectivity. This Circular shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following the completion of its publication in the Official Gazette or a newspaper of general circulation and upon its filing of three (3) copies thereof with the Office of the National Administrative Register at the University of the Philippines Law Center, Diliman, Quezon City.

Done this 17th day of November 2025.


FRANCISCO P. TIU LAUREL JR.
Secretary 



DA-CO-OSEC-DC20251021-00016

Annex A

Requirements for BPI-Approved Laboratory:

Facility

- Shall have facilities for pasteurization/solarization/sterilization/fumigation, incineration, spraying, watering facilities and disposal area.
- Shall establish a seed health unit that will observe quarantine requirements for incoming and out-going seeds
- Companies shall provide a space within the Seed health Unit where assigned plant quarantine officers can hold office
- Submission to BPI of monthly report of in-house seed health tests and phytosanitary plant inspection
- The company shall ensure that proper documentation (such as SPSIC, Phytosanitary Certificate, permits and quarantine requirements are complied with
- Results of seed health testing are presented to, and evaluated by the BPI officer for treatment recommendation and/or compliance with the conditions of the importing country or the Philippines' post entry requirements

Laboratory shall have:

- Technically competent staff
- Facilities and equipment needed
- A quality management system
- Participation in proficiency testing
- Protocols compliant with internationally accepted reference methods by international seed testing bodies
- Validation of seed health test protocols by BPI
- Disposal Plan and disposal area

In all cases, the conduct of quarantine services for incoming and outgoing seeds are under BPI's supervision

Audit

- Regular audit of the facilities shall be made by BPI to ensure compliance with the phytosanitary requirements and internationally validated seed health testing protocols or the facility shall be officially audited on a regular basis to ensure that the station meets the physical and operational requirements

CHECKLIST FOR GROWING SITE INSPECTION

Location:	Date:
	Inspector:

Instruction: Indicate the condition of the field/ screenhouse by placing a check (/) opposite each item

Conditions of a post entry area	YES	NO	REMARKS
A. OPEN FIELD			
1. Field is fenced up to a height of 1.25 m with a single-entry point and a lockable gate.			
2. Adequate buffer distance (of about 100 m) away from plants of the same genus and/or other genera of plants under evaluation. If isolation distance cannot be adopted, recommend either a.) each population isolated by a polythene barrier up to a minimum height of 1.25 m. b). planting of 3-4 rows of densely populated crops/ buffer plants/barrier or c). netting of the entire area			
3. Adequate space for the growth and maintenance of PEQ material			
4. Easily accessible for inspection			
5. Not located near populated areas and not prone to theft			
B. SCREENHOUSES - FOR GROWING IMPORTED MATERIALS			
1. Entry through two doors (self-closing and tight-fitting) separated by a vestibule / anteroom so that only one door at a time can be opened			
2. Double screen walls with mesh size fine enough to exclude the smallest insect. This will also			

prevent the escape of insects imported with the consignment.			
3. Signboard displayed at the door/ gate indicating restricted area			
4. Provision of footbath containing a suitable disinfectant			
5. Ceilings and walls to be constructed of material resistant to deterioration			
6. Cracks and gaps on floor, ceilings and walls sealed			
7. Vents, drains and air intakes covered with permanently fixed insect-proof mesh of stainless steel. If nylon mesh is used it should be of good quality and evenly woven.			
8. Drain system have a special waste trap to catch "dropped seeds" and other vegetative parts			
9. Plants held on a single-tiered mesh platform raised off the floor to allow adequate drainage and maintenance. Benches spaced to allow adequate access for quarantine inspection.			
10. Provision of insect-proof screened partitions for isolation of different kind of plant species/varieties.			
11. The facility is kept locked at all times			
12. Provision of area for drying waste/ harvested materials and storage bins for storing sterile soil / potting mixture or waste materials for disposal			
13. Easily accessible for inspection			

KEY CONCERN / PLANT QUARANTINE REQUIREMENTS/CONDITIONS:

Findings/Recommendations:

Approved:

Name/Signature of Inspector

Noted:

