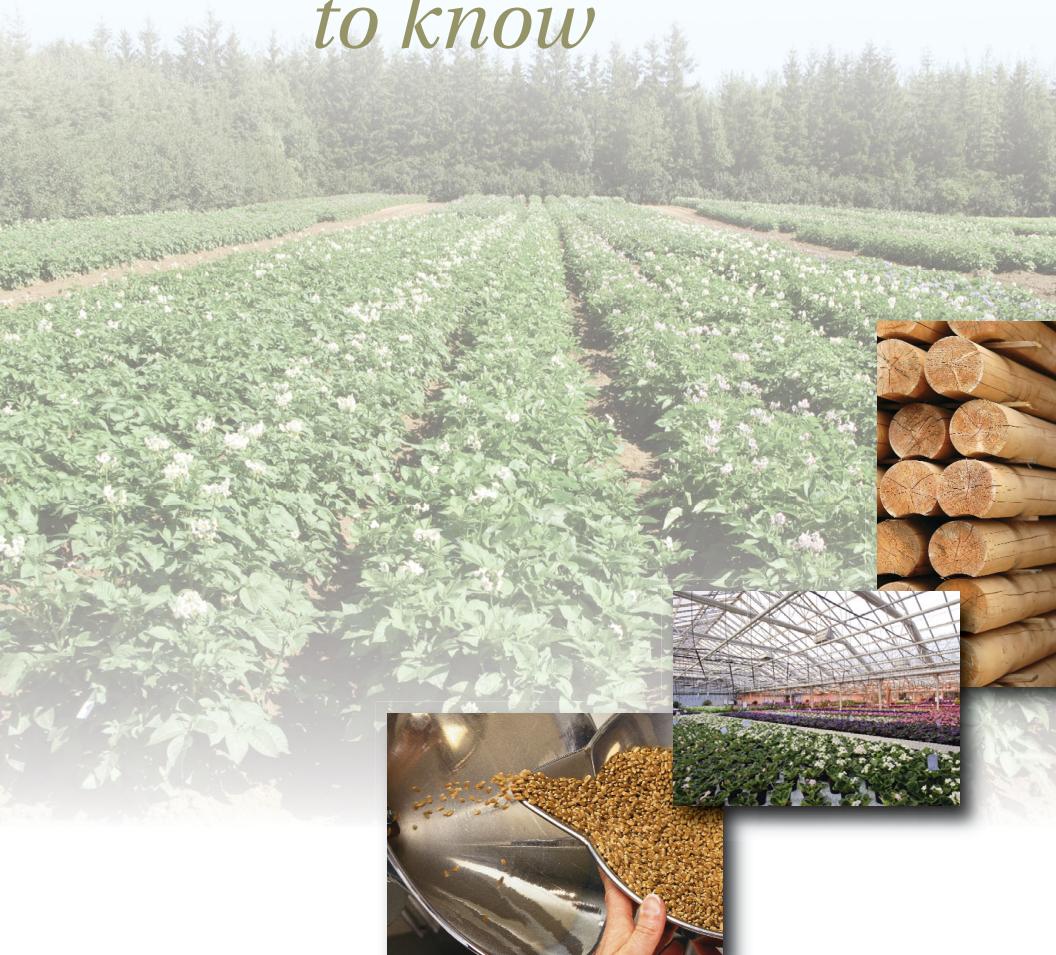




Canadian Food  
Inspection Agency

Agence canadienne  
d'inspection des aliments

# Importing plants *and* plant products: *what you need to know*



Canada



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# Importing plants and plant products: *what you need to know*

## Protecting Canada's plant resources

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is Canada's national plant protection organization. The CFIA is entrusted with this responsibility as part of its overall mandate to protect Canada's food, plant and animal resources.

Plant pests can cause damage that is costly and extensive for Canada.  
Plant pests can be insects, other plants, or micro-organisms.

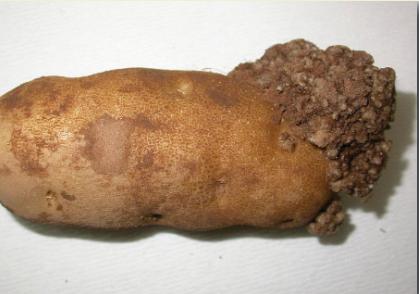
The most effective way to deal with plant or plant product pests is to prevent their entry into Canada. This requires a collaborative effort between the CFIA, domestic importers, foreign exporter communities, and our international partners. However, once a pest is present in Canada, the CFIA's goal is to reduce its impact.

The CFIA regulates the import of plants and plant products under several different acts, including the *Plant Protection Act* and *Regulations*, and the relevant sections of the *Seeds Act* and *Regulations*.

You can access these and other Acts that the CFIA administers and enforces by going to the Agency's website at [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca) and clicking on "Acts and Regulations."



A cornfield dominated by the woolly cup grass weed



Potato infested with potato wart  
(*Synchytrium endobioticum*) pathogen

## What do importers need to know?

As an importer, it is your responsibility to know the specific import requirements for the product you are bringing into Canada, which includes any materials used for transporting or packaging the product (for example, dunnage or wooden crates). In some cases, this may include requirements under more than one act and/or regulation.

- For example, apples may be regulated under the *Plant Protection Act* and *Regulations* as well as the *Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Regulations*.
- Wheat may be regulated under the *Plant Protection Act* and *Regulations* as well as the *Seeds Act* and *Regulations*.

### Each product is governed by specific import requirements.

The CFIA's Automated Import Reference System (AIRS) is a searchable database on the Agency's website that you can use to view the import requirements that apply to the plant or plant product you want to import.

More information about regulations and policies regarding import requirements is posted on the CFIA website in the form of Plant Protection Policy Directives.

You can also get this information by contacting the CFIA offices by phone at 1-800-442-2342, by postal mail, or by email at [plantimportationsvegetaux@inspection.gc.ca](mailto:plantimportationsvegetaux@inspection.gc.ca).

You must ensure that your shipment **meets all applicable import requirements** when it arrives at the Canadian border.

## What is a pest risk assessment?

When an importer wants to import a product that either has no previous history of being imported into Canada, or a previously imported product from a new origin, the CFIA conducts a pest risk assessment.

The purpose of the assessment is to determine if a commodity could be carrying pests, diseases or weeds that could establish in Canada and cause losses affecting farmers or foresters, or cause environmental change. This will determine whether or not phytosanitary control measures are required.

When the CFIA identifies a new pest of concern for Canada through the pest risk assessment, it updates its list of *Pests Regulated by Canada*, which is published on the Agency's website.

## Common pitfalls for importers

If a product does not meet the applicable import requirements, it is considered to be "non-compliant." As an importer, some questions for you to consider are the following:

- Does the imported product have the required import documentation? These may include
  - a phytosanitary certificate issued by the exporting country's national plant protection organization indicating that the plant or plant product meets Canada's phytosanitary import requirements
  - an import permit, issued by the CFIA, which authorizes the importer to import a commodity under specific conditions of entry and use
  - a seed analysis certificate for seed imports showing freedom from prohibited noxious weed seeds
  - a certificate of origin where materials may originate only from pre-approved sources
- Does the product adhere to specific import requirements? (For example, has the shipment undergone a specific pest treatment such as heat treatment or fumigation at origin, before entering Canada, or did the product enter Canada through an approved location or facility, if required?)
  - Is the product a regulated plant pest, or is it contaminated with a quarantine plant pest or other prohibited substance (for example, soil or prohibited noxious weed seeds)?
  - Did the product test positive for a quarantine pest on arrival in Canada, despite certification by the exporting country?



Khapra beetle (adults and larvae) in wheat



Roots of an ornamental plant contaminated with soil



Wood pallets (wood packaging material)

## How does the CFIA respond to issues of non-compliance?

The CFIA's authority to address non-compliance comes from the *Plant Protection Act* and *Regulations*, and the *Seeds Act* and *Regulations* as they relate to plant protection.

Measures the CFIA can use to mitigate the risk of a non-compliant shipment include the following:

- ordering the shipment destroyed
- ordering the shipment to be returned to its origin or otherwise removed from Canada
- ordering a non-compliant shipment to be treated in Canada
- imposing a fine in addition to other measures listed above

Where a shipment is inspected and determined to be non-compliant despite certification from the exporting country's national plant protection organization, the CFIA will send a Notification of Non-Compliance to the foreign national plant protection organization, so that it may take the appropriate corrective actions on certifying future shipments. This step is in addition to the mitigation approaches noted above.

**As the importer, you are responsible for all costs associated with bringing a shipment into compliance.** If you do not achieve compliance, the shipment may be forfeited to the Government of Canada and disposed of.

## Why does the CFIA regulate plants and plant product imports?

Plant pests can affect crops across the country. This

- reduces profits (which affects farmers' livelihoods),
- threatens our domestic food supply, and
- threatens our ability to trade with other countries.



As invasive species, they can wreak havoc on our ecosystems by destroying native species and causing unalterable damage to the Canadian landscape. For example, the emerald ash borer, native to Asia, has killed millions of ash trees across North America since it arrived in 2004, and will likely kill millions more. It probably entered Canada and the United States on untreated wood packaging materials, such as pallets or boxes.

Plant pests can be introduced through various pathways, including

- wood packaging,
- soil,
- firewood,
- containers, and
- transport vehicles (such as ships and aircraft).

The CFIA establishes import requirements by considering the following:

- the risks associated with the product
- the product's intended use (for example, plants used for propagation versus those for consumption or processing)
  - the product's country of origin and the presence of plant pests of concern in that country
  - the presence or absence of certain plant pests in Canada
  - the availability of risk mitigation tools, such as heat treatment or fumigation, and their effectiveness



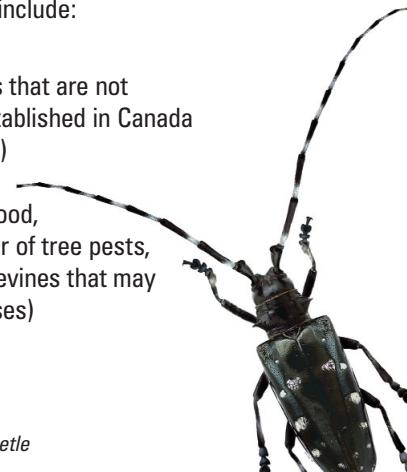
*Firewood, a pathway for pests*



Key importation issues for the CFIA include:

- plant and plant products that
  - are pests in and of themselves that are not established or are partially established in Canada (for example, woolly cup grass)
  - are pathways for introducing plant pests (for example firewood, which is a common transporter of tree pests, as well as fruit trees and grapevines that may transport numerous plant viruses)

*Damage caused by the Asian long-horned beetle*



- may host quarantine diseases of other plants (for example, barberry, which acts as a host for wheat stem rust)
- soil and wood packaging, which are internationally recognized high-risk pathways for many plant pests

Specific commodities that have import control measures in place include

- forestry commodities (such as trees, lumber, logs, wood packaging)
- field crops (such as cereals, pulses, oilseeds, forages)
- seed
- horticulture commodities (such as fruits and vegetables, greenhouse and nursery ornamentals, potatoes)



Nursery stock

## Importing prohibited plants or plant products

Under the *Plant Protection Regulations*, you may import prohibited plants or plant products into Canada

- only if importing for the purpose of scientific research, education, exhibition and/or industrial processing, and
- only under a special permit issued by the CFIA, **before the shipment arrives in Canada.**

The CFIA will issue such a permit only once it has confirmed that the importer is able to comply with the containment conditions, and that other conditions, established by the CFIA to allow the import of the prohibited product, are met.

