

## U.S. lifts ban on Spanish pepper imports

**Spanish exporters will once again be able to ship fresh peppers to the U.S. market after an almost year-long absence, after authorities deemed the country's pest management practices were sufficient to keep out incursions of Mediterranean fruit fly.**

The U.S. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) implemented the ban on Dec. 30 last year in response to multiple detections of the pest's larvae on peppers from the European country.

"APHIS and the National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO) of Spain investigated the probable issues that resulted in these interceptions and identified steps to mitigate pest risk and prevent future interceptions," APHIS said in an announcement late last week.

"Spain instituted a series of actions which included tightened requirements for growers and packing houses to follow for inclusion in the approved list for export."

A new manual was established in Spain with production guidelines, along with additional medfly traps for approved greenhouses and improved communication procedures between growers, packhouse operators and state and local officials.

"The NPPO also established a mandatory training with refresher courses yearly," APHIS said.

In November, an APHIS review team in Spain visited "numerous" export-oriented greenhouses, reviewed fruit fly trapping data and the country's produce export database program, inspected facilities including packing houses, observed an export inspection by Spanish officials, and discussed growing operations and certification procedures with local stakeholders.

"The APHIS review team concluded that the new procedures being enforced by Spain were adequate to prevent future interceptions; therefore, APHIS is lifting the Federal Order suspending imports of peppers from Spain to the United States, effective immediately," the service said.

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