

EU implements electronic system for certificates of inspection

The European Union (EU) is implementing a new system of electronic certificates of inspection for imports of organic products from the United States (and other third countries) in the Trade Control & Expert System (TRACES) – the EU's existing electronic system for tracking movements of food products across the EU.

This online management tool facilitates the exchange of information between EU trading parties and control authorities, such as the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) National Organic Program.

Under the current organic equivalency arrangement between the United States and the EU, certified operations must ship organic products with an EU certificate of inspection, completed by a USDA-accredited certifier. The implementation of updates to EU TRACES will digitize the certification documentation for organic products imported to EU member countries.

EU TRACES becomes effective on April 19, 2017. Once effective, U.S. certifiers will have an additional six months to adapt to using the system, during which time paper and electronic certificates of inspection will coexist in the marketplace. The system will become fully electronic beginning October 19, 2017, after which time organic imports will be covered only by e-certification.

To help certifiers and other authorities comply with this new requirement, the EU has provided instructions and plans to conduct training.

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